

THE HUMOROUS TALES  
OF  
RUDYARD KIPLING



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RUDYARD KIPLING

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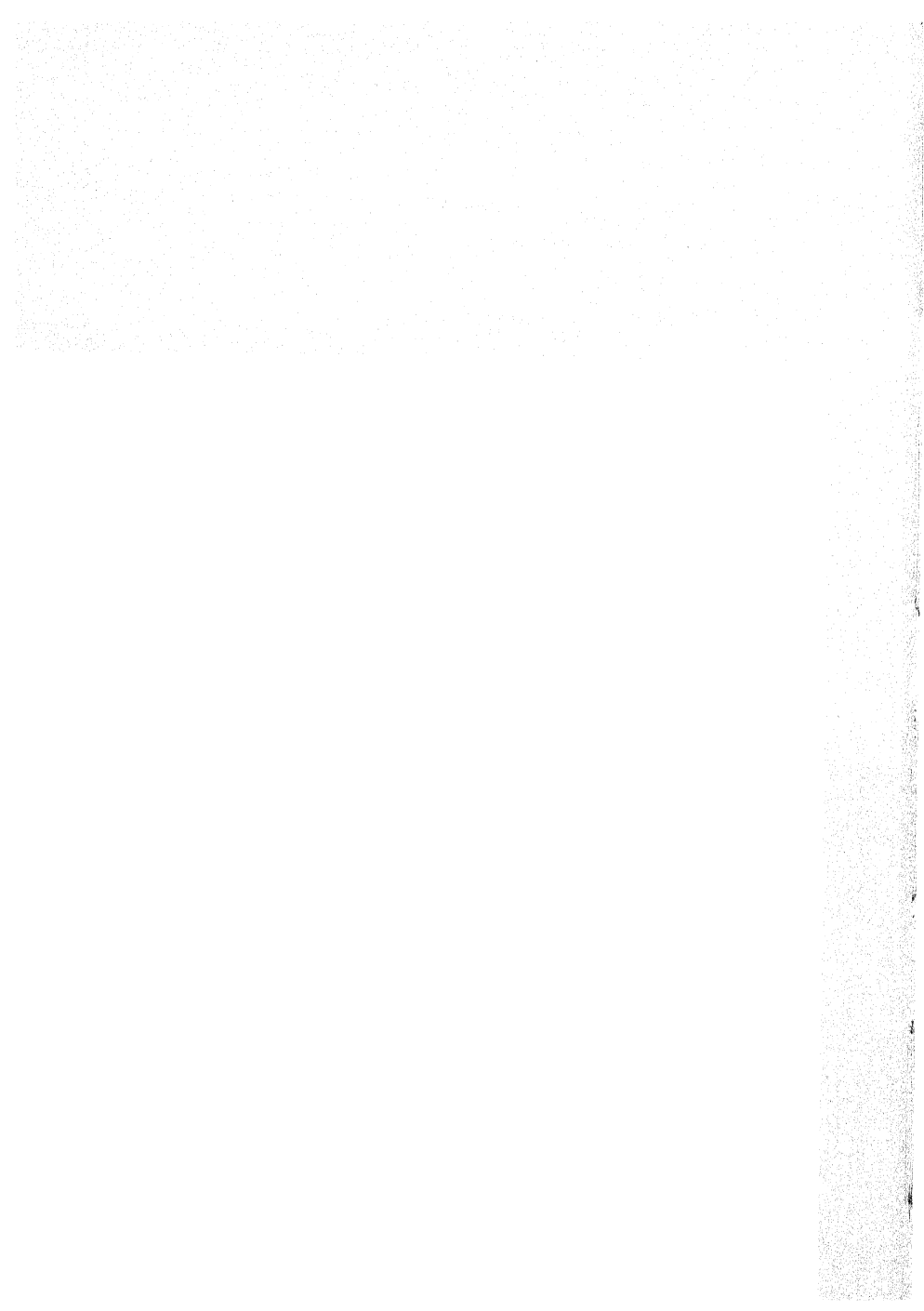
FIRST EDITION

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE LEGEND OF MIRTH	1
THE TAKING OF LUNGTUNGPEN	5
MOTI GUJ—MUTINEER	13
THE ROUT OF THE WHITE HUSSARS	23
THE FIRST SAILOR	36
JUDSON AND THE EMPIRE	53
NAMGAY DOOLA	87
PIG	102
ALNASCHAR AND THE OXEN	111
THE BULL THAT THOUGHT	114
PROLOGUE TO THE MASTER-COOK'S TALE	135
HIS GIFT	137
THE PRESS	157
THE VILLAGE THAT VOTED THE EARTH WAS FLAT	159
THE PUZZLER	209
THE PUZZLER	211
THE INCARNATION OF KRISHNA MULVANEY	231

	PAGE
GALLIO'S SONG	267
LITTLE FOXES	269
MY LORD THE ELEPHANT	299
'BRUGGLESMTIH'	326
THE FABULISTS	347
THE VORTEX	349
THE SONG OF SEVEN CITIES	370
THE NECESSITARIAN	373

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## THE LEGEND OF MIRTH

THE Four Archangels, so the legends tell,  
Raphael, Gabriel, Michael, Azrael,  
Being first of those to whom the Power was shown  
Stood first of all the Host before The Throne,  
And, when the Charges were allotted, burst  
Tumultuous-winged from out the assembly first.  
Zeal was their spur that bade them strictly heed  
Their own high judgment on their lightest deed.  
Zeal was their spur which, when relief was given,  
Urged them unwearied to new toils in Heaven ;  
For Honour's sake perfecting every task  
Beyond what e'en Perfection's self could ask. . . .  
And Allah, Who created Zeal and Pride,  
Knows how the twain are perilous-near allied.

It chanced on one of Heaven's long-lighted days,  
The Four and all the Host being gone their ways  
Each to his Charge, the shining Courts were void  
Save for one Seraph whom no charge employed,  
With folden wings and slumber-threatened brow,  
To whom The Word : ' Beloved, what dost thou ? '  
' By the Permission,' came the answer soft,  
' Little I do nor do that little oft.  
As is The Will in Heaven so on Earth  
Where, by The Will, I strive to make men mirth.'

He ceased and sped, hearing The Word once more :  
' Beloved, go thy way and greet the Four.'

Systems and Universes overpast,  
The Seraph came upon the Four, at last,  
Guiding and guarding with devoted mind  
The tedious generations of mankind  
Who lent at most unwilling ear and eye  
When they could not escape the ministry. . . .  
Yet, patient, faithful, firm, persistent, just  
Toward all that gross, indifferent, facile dust,  
The Archangels laboured to discharge their trust  
By precept and example, prayer and law,  
Advice, reproof, and rule, but, labouring, saw  
Each in his fellows' countenance confessed,  
The Doubt that sickens : ' Have I done my best? '

Even as they sighed and turned to toil anew,  
The Seraph hailed them with observance due :  
And, after some fit talk of higher things,  
Touched tentative on mundane happenings.  
This they permitting, he, emboldened thus,  
Prolused of humankind promiscuous.  
And, since the large contention less avails  
Than instances observed, he told them tales—  
Tales of the shop, the bed, the court, the street,  
Intimate, elemental, indiscreet :  
Occasions where Confusion smiting swift  
Piles jest on jest as snow-slides pile the drift  
Whence, one by one, beneath deriding skies,  
The victims, bare, bewildered heads arise—  
Tales of the passing of the spirit, graced  
With humour blinding as the doom it faced—



Stark tales of ribaldry that broke aside  
To tears, by laughter swallowed ere they dried—  
Tales to which neither grace nor gain accrue,  
But only (Allah be exalted !) true,  
And only, as the Seraph showed that night,  
Delighting to the limits of delight.

These he rehearsed with artful pause and halt,  
And such pretence of memory at fault,  
That soon the Four—so well the bait was thrown—  
Came to his aid with memories of their own—  
Matters dismissed long since as small or vain,  
Whereof the high significance had lain  
Hid, till the ungirt glosses made it plain.  
Then, as enlightenment came broad and fast,  
Each marvelled at his own oblivious past,  
Until—the Gates of Laughter opened wide—  
The Four, with that bland Seraph at their side,  
While they recalled, compared, and amplified,  
In utter mirth forgot both Zeal and Pride !

High over Heaven the lamps of midnight burned  
Ere, weak with merriment, the Four returned,  
Not in that order they were wont to keep—  
Pinion to pinion answering, sweep for sweep,  
In awful diapason heard afar—  
But shoutingly adrift 'twixt star and star ;  
Reeling a planet's orbit left or right  
As laughter took them in the abysmal Night ;  
Or, by the point of some remembered jest,  
Winged and brought helpless down through gulfs  
    unguessed,  
Where the blank worlds that gather to the birth

Leaped in the Womb of Darkness at their mirth,  
And e'en Gehenna's bondsmen understood  
They were not damned from human brotherhood. . . .

Not first nor last of Heaven's high Host, the Four  
That night took place beneath The Throne once  
more.

O lovelier than their morning majesty,  
The understanding light behind the eye!  
O more compelling than their old command,  
The new-learned friendly gesture of the hand!  
O sweeter than their zealous fellowship,  
The wise half-smile that passed from lip to lip !  
O well and roundly, when Command was given,  
They told their tale against themselves to Heaven,  
And in the silence, waiting on The Word,  
Received the Peace and Pardon of The Lord !

## THE TAKING OF LUNGTUNGPEN

So we loosed a bloomin' volley,  
An' we made the beggars cut,  
An' when our pouch was emptied out,  
We used the bloomin' butt.

Ho! My!

Don't yer come anigh

When Tommy is a-playin' with the baynit an' the butt.

*Barrack-Room Ballad.*

MY friend Private Mulvaney told me this, sitting on the parapet of the road to Dagshai, when we were hunting butterflies together. He had theories about the Army, and coloured clay pipes perfectly. He said that the young soldier is the best to work with, 'on account av the surpassin' innocinse av the child.'

'Now, listen!' said Mulvaney, throwing himself full length on the wall in the sun. 'I'm a born scutt av the barrick-room! The Army's mate an' dhrink to me, bekaze I'm wan av the few that can't quit ut. I've put in sivinteen years, an' the pipeclay's in the marrow av me. Av I cud have kept out av wan big dhrink a month, I wud have been a Hon'ry Lift'nint by this time—a nuisance to my betthers, a laughin'-shtock to my equils, an' a curse to meself. Bein' fwhat I am, I'm Privit Mulvaney, wid no good-conduc' pay an' a devourin' thirst. Always barrin'

me little frind Bobs Bahadur, I know as much about the Army as most men.'

I said something here.

'Wolseley be shot ! Betune you an' me an' that butterfly-net, he's a ramblin', incoherent sort av a divil, wid wan oi on the Quane an' the Coort, an' the other on his blessed silf—everlastin'ly playin' Saysar and Alexandrier rowled into a lump. Now Bobs is a sinsible little man. Wid Bobs an' a few three-year-olds, I'd swape any army av the earth into a towel, an' throw it away aftherwards. Faith, I'm not jokin' ! 'Tis the bhoys—the raw bhoys—that don't know fwhat a bullut manes, an' wudn't care av they did—that dhu the work. They're crammed wid bull-mate till they fairly *ramps* wid good livin' ; and thin, av they don't fight, they blow each other's hids off. 'Tis the trut' I'm tellin' you. They shud be kept on water an' rice in the hot weather ; but ther'd be a mut'ny av 'twas done.

'Did ye iver hear how Privit Mulvaney tuk the town av Lungtungpen ? I thought not ! 'Twas the Lift'nint got the credit ; but 'twas me planned the schame. A little before I was inviladed from Burma, me an' four-an'-twinty young wans undher a Lift'nint Brazenose, was ruinin' our dijeshins thryin' to catch dacoits. An' such double-ended divils I niver knew ! 'Tis only a *dah* an' a Snider that makes a dacoit. Widout thim, he's a peaceful cultivator, an' felony for to shoot. We hunted, an' we hunted, an' tuk fever an' elephints now an' again ; but no dacoits. Evenshually, we *puckarowed* wan man. "Trate him tinderly," sez the Lift'nint. So I tuk him away into the jungle, wid the Burmese

Interprut'r an' my clanin'-rod. Sez I to the man, "My peaceful squireen," sez I, "you shquot on your hunkers an' dimonstrate to *my* frind here, where *your* frinds are whin they're at home?" Wid that I introjuced him to the clanin'-rod, an' he comminst to jabber; the Interprut'r interprutin' in between, an' me helpin' the Intilligence Departmint wid my clanin'-rod whin the man misremimbered.

'Prisintly, I learn that, acrost the river, about nine miles away, was a town just dhrippin' wid dahs, an' bohs an' arrows, an' dacoits, an' elephints, an' *jingles*. "Good!" sez I; "this office will now close!"

'That night I went to the Lift'nint an' communicates my information. I never thought much of Lift'nint Brazenose till that night. He was shtiff wid books an' the-ouries, an' all manner av thrimmin's no manner av use. "Town did ye say?" sez he. "Accordin' to the the-ouries av War, we shud wait for reinforcements."—"Faith!" thinks I, "we'd betther dig our graves thin"; for the nearest throops was up to their shtocks in the marshes out Mambu way. "But," says the Lift'nint, "since 'tis a speshil case, I'll make an excepshin. We'll visit this Lungtungpen to-night."

'The bhoys was fairly woild wid deloight whin I tould 'em; an', by this an' that, they wint through the jungle like buck-rabbits. About midnight we come to the shtrame which I had clane forgot to minshin to my ori'cer. I was on, ahead, wid four bhoys, an' I thought that the Lift'nint might want to the-ourise. "Shtrip, bhoys!" sez I. "Shtrip to the buff, an' shwim in where glory waits!"—

"But I *can't* shwim!" sez two av thim. "To think I should live to hear that from a bhoys wid a board-school edukashin!" sez I. "Take a lump av thimber, an' me an' Conolly here will ferry ye over, ye young ladies!"

'We got an ould tree-trunk, an' pushed off wid the kits an' the rifles on it. The night was chokin' dhark, an' just as we was fairly embarked, I heard the Lift'nint behind av me callin' out. "There's a bit av a *nullah* here, sorr," sez I, "but I can feel the bottom already." So I cud, for I was not a yard from the bank.

' "Bit av a *nullah*! Bit av an eshtury!" sez the Lift'nint. "Go on, ye mad Irishman! Shtrip, bhoys!" I heard him laugh; an' the bhoys begun shtrippin' an' rollin' a log into the wather to put their kits on. So me an' Conolly shtruck out through the warm wather wid our log, an' the rest come on behind.

'That shtrame was miles woide! Orth'ris, on the rear-rank log, whispers we had got into the Thames below Sheerness by mistake. "Kape on shwimmin', ye little blayguard," sez I, "an' don't go pokin' your dirty jokes at the Irriwaddy."—"Silince, men!" sings out the Lift'nint. So we shwum on into the black dhark, wid our chests on the logs, trustin' in the Saints an' the luck av the British Army.

'Evenshually, we hit ground—a bit av sand—an' a man. I put my heel on the back av him. He skreeched an' ran.

' "Now we've done it!" sez Lift'nint Brazenose. "Where the Divil *is* Lungtungpen?" There was about a minute and a half to wait. The bhoys laid a

houl't av their rifles an' some thried to put their belts on ; we was marchin' wid fixed baynits av coorse. Thin we knew where Lungtungpen was ; for we had hit the river-wall av it in the dhark, an' the whole town blazed wid thim messin' *jingles* an' Sniders like a cat's back on a frosty night. They was firin' all ways at wanst ; but over our hids into the shtrame.

"Have you got your rifles?" sez Brazenose. "Got 'em!" sez Orth'ris. "I've got that thief Mulvaney's for all my back-pay, an' she'll kick my heart sick wid that blunderin' long shtock av hers."—"Go on!" yells Brazenose, whippin' his sword out. "Go on an' take the town! An' the Lord have mercy on our sows!"

'Thin the bhoys gave wan devastatin' howl, an' pranced into the dhark, feelin' for the town, an' blindin' and stiffin' like Cavalry Ridin' Masters whin the grass pricked their bare legs. I hammered wid the butt at some bamboo-thing that felt wake, an' the rest come an' hammered contagious, while the *jingles* was jinglin', an' feroshus yells from inside was shplittin' our ears. We was too close under the wall for thim to hurt us.

'Evenshually, the thing, whatever ut was, bruk ; an' the six-and-twinty av us tumbled, wan after the other, naked as we was borrun, into the town of Lungtungpen. There was a *melly* av a sumpshus kind for a whoile ; but whether they tuk us, all white an' wet, for a new breed av divil, or a new kind av dacoit, I don't know. They ran as though we was both, an' we wint into thim, baynit an' butt, shriekin' wid laughin'. There was torches in the shtreets, an'

I saw little Orth'ris rubbin' his showlther ivry time he loosed my long-shtock Martini ; an' Brazenose walkin' into the gang wid his sword, like Diarmid av the Gowlden Collar—barring he hadn't a stitch av clothin' on him. We diskivered elephints wid dacoits under their bellies, an', what wid wan thing an' another, we was busy till mornin' takin' possession av the town of Lungtungpen.

'Thin we halted an' formed up, the wimmen howlin' in the houses an' Lift'nint Brazenose blushin' pink in the light av the mornin' sun. 'Twas the most ondasint p'rade I iver tuk a hand in. Foive-and-twinty privits an' an orf'cer av the Line in review ordher, an' not as much as wud dust a fife betune 'em all in the way av clothin' ! Eight av us had their belts an' pouches on ; but the rest had gone in wid a handful of cartridges an' the skin God gave thim. *They* was as naked as Vanus.

' "Number off from the right !" sez the Lift'nint. "Odd numbers fall out to dress ; even numbers pathrol the town till relieved by the dressing party." Let me tell you, pathrollin' a town wid nothing on is an *expayrience*. I pathrolled for tin minut's, an' begad, before 'twas over, I blushed. The women laughed so. I niver blushed before or since ; but I blushed all over my carkiss thin. Orth'ris didn't pathrol. He sez only, "Portsmith Barricks an' the 'Ard av a Sunday !" Thin he lay down an' rowled any ways wid laughin'.

'Whin we was all dhressed we counted the dead—sivinty-foive dacoits besides wounded. We tuk five elephints, a hunder' an' sivinty Sniders, two hundher' dahs, and a lot av other burglarious thruck. Not a



man av us was hurt—excep' maybe the Lift'nint, an' he from the shock to his dasincy.

' The Headman av Lungtungpen, who surrinder'd himself, asked the Interpret'r—"Av the English fight like that wid their clo'es off, what in the wurruld do they do wid their clo'es on?" Orth'ris began rowlin' his eyes an' crackin' his fingers an' dancin' a step-dance for to impress the Headman. He ran to his house ; an' we spint the rest av the day carryin' the Lift'nint on our showlthers round the town, an' playin' wid the Burmese babies—fat, little, brown little devils, as pretty as pictur's.

' Whin I was inviladed for the dysent'ry to India, I sez to the Lift'nint, "Sorr," sez I, "you've the makin's in you av a great man ; but, av you'll let an ould sodger spake, you're too fond av the-ourisin'." He shuk hands wid me and sez, "Hit high, hit low, there's no plazin' you, Mulvaney. You've seen me waltzin' through Lungtungpen like a Red Injin widout the war-paint, an' you say I'm too fond av the-ourisin'?"—"Sorr," sez I, for I loved the bhoy, "I wud waltz wid you in that condishin through Hell, an' so wud the rest av the men!" Thin I wint downshtrame in the flat an' left him my blessin'. May the Saints carry ut where ut shud go, for he was a fine upstandin' young orf'cer.

' To reshume. Fwhat I've said jist shows the use av three-year-olds. Wud fifty seasoned sodgers have taken Lungtungpen in the dhark that way? No! They'd know the risk av fever and chill ; let alone the shootin'. Two hundher' might have done ut. But the three-year-olds know little an' care less ; an' where there's no fear there's no danger. Catch thim

young, feed thim high, an' by the honour av that great, little man Bobs, behind a good orf'cer, 'tisn't only dacoits they'd smash wid their clo'es off—'tis Con-ti-nental Ar-r-r-mies ! They tuk Lungtungpen nakid ; an' they'd take St. Pethersburg in their dhrawers ! Begad, they wud that !

' Here's your pipe, sorr. Shmoke her tinderly wid honey-dew, afther letting the reek av the Canteen plug die away. But 'tis no good, thanks to you all the same, fillin' my pouch wid your chopped hay. Canteen baccy's like the Army ; it shpoils a man's taste for moilder things.'

So saying, Mulvaney took up his butterfly-net, and returned to barracks.

## MOTI GUJ—MUTINEER

ONCE upon a time there was a coffee-planter in India who wished to clear some forest land for coffee-planting. When he had cut down all the trees and burned the under-wood the stumps still remained. Dynamite is expensive and slow-fire slow. The happy medium for stump-clearing is the lord of all beasts, who is the elephant. He will either push the stump out of the ground with his tusks, if he has any, or drag it out with ropes. The planter, therefore, hired elephants by ones and twos and threes, and fell to work. The very best of all the elephants belonged to the very worst of all the drivers or mahouts ; and the superior beast's name was Moti Guj. He was the absolute property of his mahout, which would never have been the case under native rule, for Moti Guj was a creature to be desired by kings ; and his name, being translated, meant the Pearl Elephant. Because the British Government was in the land, Deesa, the mahout, enjoyed his property undisturbed. He was dissipated. When he had made much money through the strength of his elephant, he would get extremely drunk and give Moti Guj a beating with a tent-peg over the tender nails of the forefeet. Moti Guj never trampled the life out of Deesa on these

occasions, for he knew that after the beating was over Deesa would embrace his trunk, and weep and call him his love and his life and the liver of his soul, and give him some liquor. Moti Guj was very fond of liquor—arrack for choice, though he would drink palm-tree toddy if nothing better offered. Then Deesa would go to sleep between Moti Guj's forefeet, and as Deesa generally chose the middle of the public road, and as Moti Guj mounted guard over him and would not permit horse, foot, or cart to pass by, traffic was congested till Deesa saw fit to wake up.

There was no sleeping in the daytime on the planter's clearing : the wages were too high to risk. Deesa sat on Moti Guj's neck and gave him orders, while Moti Guj rooted up the stumps—for he owned a magnificent pair of tusks ; or pulled at the end of a rope—for he had a magnificent pair of shoulders, while Deesa kicked him behind the ears and said he was the king of elephants. At evening time Moti Guj would wash down his three hundred pounds' weight of green food with a quart of arrack, and Deesa would take a share and sing songs between Moti Guj's legs till it was time to go to bed. Once a week Deesa led Moti Guj down to the river, and Moti Guj lay on his side luxuriously in the shallows, while Deesa went over him with a coir-swab and a brick. Moti Guj never mistook the pounding blow of the latter for the smack of the former that warned him to get up and turn over on the other side. Then Deesa would look at his feet, and examine his eyes, and turn up the fringes of his mighty ears in case of sores or budding ophthalmia. After inspection, the two would ' come up with a song from the sea,' Moti

Guj all black and shining, waving a torn tree branch twelve feet long in his trunk, and Deesa knotting up his own long wet hair.

It was a peaceful, well-paid life till Deesa felt the return of the desire to drink deep. He wished for an orgy. The little draughts that led nowhere were taking the manhood out of him.

He went to the planter, and 'My mother's dead,' said he, weeping.

'She died on the last plantation two months ago ; and she died once before that when you were working for me last year,' said the planter, who knew something of the ways of natedom.

'Then it's my aunt, and she was just the same as a mother to me,' said Deesa, weeping more than ever. 'She has left eighteen small children entirely without bread, and it is I who must fill their little stomachs,' said Deesa, beating his head on the floor.

'Who brought you the news ?' said the planter.

'The post,' said Deesa.

'There hasn't been a post here for the past week. Get back to your lines !'

'A devastating sickness has fallen on my village, and all my wives are dying,' yelled Deesa, really in tears this time.

'Call Chihun, who comes from Deesa's village,' said the planter. 'Chihun, has this man a wife ?'

'He !' said Chihun. 'No. Not a woman of our village would look at him. They'd sooner marry the elephant.' Chihun snorted. Deesa wept and bellowed.

'You will get into a difficulty in a minute,' said the planter. 'Go back to your work !'

'Now I will speak Heaven's truth,' gulped Deesa, with an inspiration. 'I haven't been drunk for two months. I desire to depart in order to get properly drunk afar off and distant from this heavenly plantation. Thus I shall cause no trouble.'

A flickering smile crossed the planter's face. 'Deesa,' said he, 'you've spoken the truth, and I'd give you leave on the spot if anything could be done with Moti Guj while you're away. You know that he will only obey your orders.'

'May the Light of the Heavens live forty thousand years. I shall be absent but ten little days. After that, upon my faith and honour and soul, I return. As to the inconsiderable interval, have I the gracious permission of the Heaven-born to call up Moti Guj?'

Permission was granted, and, in answer to Deesa's shrill yell, the lordly tusker swung out of the shade of a clump of trees where he had been squirting dust over himself till his master should return.

'Light of my heart, Protector of the Drunken, Mountain of Might, give ear,' said Deesa, standing in front of him.

Moti Guj gave ear, and saluted with his trunk. 'I am going away,' said Deesa.

Moti Guj's eyes twinkled. He liked jaunts as well as his master. One could snatch all manner of nice things from the roadside then.

'But you, you fubsy old pig, must stay behind and work.'

The twinkle died out as Moti Guj tried to look delighted. He hated stump-hauling on the plantation. It hurt his teeth.

'I shall be gone for ten days, O Delectable One.

Hold up your near forefoot and I'll impress the fact upon it, warty toad of a dried mud-puddle.' Deesa took a tent-peg and banged Moti Guj ten times on the nails. Moti Guj grunted and shuffled from foot to foot.

'Ten days,' said Deesa, 'you must work and haul and root trees as Chihun here shall order you. Take up Chihun and set him on your neck!' Moti Guj curled the tip of his trunk, Chihun put his foot there and was swung on to the neck. Deesa handed Chihun the heavy *ankus*, the iron elephant-goad.

Chihun thumped Moti Guj's bald head as a paviour thumps a kerbstone.

Moti Guj trumpeted.

'Be still, hog of the backwoods! Chihun's your mahout for ten days. And now bid me good-bye, beast after mine own heart. Oh, my lord, my king! Jewel of all created elephants, lily of the herd, preserve your honoured health; be virtuous. Adieu!'

Moti Guj lapped his trunk round Deesa and swung him into the air twice. That was his way of bidding the man good-bye.

'He'll work now,' said Deesa to the planter. 'Have I leave to go?'

The planter nodded, and Deesa dived into the woods. Moti Guj went back to haul stumps.

Chihun was very kind to him, but he felt unhappy and forlorn notwithstanding. Chihun gave him balls of spices, and tickled him under the chin, and Chihun's little baby cooed to him after work was over, and Chihun's wife called him a darling; but Moti Guj was a bachelor by instinct, as Deesa was. He did not understand the domestic emotions. He

wanted the light of his universe back again—the drink and the drunken slumber, the savage beatings and the savage caresses.

None the less he worked well, and the planter wondered. Deesa had vagabonded along the roads till he met a marriage procession of his own caste and, drinking, dancing, and tippling, had drifted past all knowledge of the lapse of time.

The morning of the eleventh day dawned, and there returned no Deesa. Moti Guj was loosed from his ropes for the daily stint. He swung clear, looked round, shrugged his shoulders, and began to walk away, as one having business elsewhere.

‘Hi ! ho ! Come back you,’ shouted Chihun. ‘Come back, and put me on your neck, Misborn Mountain. Return, Splendour of the Hillsides. Adornment of all India, heave to, or I’ll bang every toe off your fat forefoot !’

Moti Guj gurgled gently, but did not obey. Chihun ran after him with a rope and caught him up. Moti Guj put his ears forward, and Chihun knew what that meant, though he tried to carry it off with high words.

‘None of your nonsense with me,’ said he. ‘To your pickets, Devil-son.’

‘Hrrump !’ said Moti Guj, and that was all—that and the forebent ears.

Moti Guj put his hands in his pockets, chewed a branch for a toothpick, and strolled about the clearing, making jest of the other elephants, who had just set to work.

Chihun reported the state of affairs to the planter, who came out with a dog-whip and cracked it furi-



ously. Moti Guj paid the white man the compliment of charging him nearly a quarter of a mile across the clearing and 'Hrrumphing' him into the verandah. Then he stood outside the house chuckling to himself, and shaking all over with the fun of it, as an elephant will.

'We'll thrash him,' said the planter. 'He shall have the finest thrashing that ever elephant received. Give Kala Nag and Nazim twelve foot of chain apiece, and tell them to lay on twenty blows.'

Kala Nag—which means Black Snake—and Nazim were two of the biggest elephants in the lines, and one of their duties was to administer the graver punishments, since no man can beat an elephant properly.

They took the whipping-chains and rattled them in their trunks as they sidled up to Moti Guj, meaning to hustle him between them. Moti Guj had never, in all his life of thirty-nine years, been whipped, and he did not intend to open new experiences. So he waited, weaving his head from right to left, and measuring the precise spot in Kala Nag's fat side where a blunt tusk would sink deepest. Kala Nag had no tusks ; the chain was his badge of authority ; but he judged it good to swing wide of Moti Guj at the last minute, and seem to appear as if he had brought out the chain for amusement. Nazim turned round and went home early. He did not feel fighting-fit that morning, and so Moti Guj was left standing alone with his ears cocked.

That decided the planter to argue no more, and Moti Guj rolled back to his inspection of the clearing. An elephant who will not work, and is not

tied up, is not quite so manageable as an eighty-one ton gun loose in a heavy sea-way. He slapped old friends on the back and asked them if the stumps were coming away easily ; he talked nonsense concerning labour and the inalienable rights of elephants to a long nooning ; and, wandering to and fro, thoroughly demoralised the garden till sundown, when he returned to his pickets for food.

‘If you won’t work you shan’t eat,’ said Chihun angrily. ‘You’re a wild elephant, and no educated animal at all. Go back to your jungle.’

Chihun’s little brown baby, rolling on the floor of the hut, stretched its fat arms to the huge shadow in the doorway. Moti Guj knew well that it was the dearest thing on earth to Chihun. He swung out his trunk with a fascinating crook at the end, and the brown baby threw itself shouting upon it. Moti Guj made fast and pulled up till the brown baby was crowing in the air twelve feet above his father’s head.

‘Great Chief !’ said Chihun. ‘Flour cakes of the best, twelve in number, two feet across, and soaked in rum shall be yours on the instant, and two hundred pounds’ weight of fresh-cut young sugar-cane therewith. Deign only to put down safely that insignificant brat who is my heart and my life to me.’

Moti Guj tucked the brown baby comfortably between his forefeet, that could have knocked into toothpicks all Chihun’s hut, and waited for his food. He ate it, and the brown baby crawled away. Moti Guj dozed, and thought of Deesa. One of many mysteries connected with the elephant is that his

huge body needs less sleep than anything else that lives. Four or five hours in the night suffice—two just before midnight, lying down on one side ; two just after one o'clock, lying down on the other. The rest of the silent hours are filled with eating and fidgeting and long grumbling soliloquies.

At midnight, therefore, Moti Guj strode out of his pickets, for a thought had come to him that Deesa might be lying drunk somewhere in the dark forest with none to look after him. So all that night he chased through the undergrowth, blowing and trumpeting and shaking his ears. He went down to the river and blared across the shallows where Deesa used to wash him, but there was no answer. He could not find Deesa, but he disturbed all the elephants in the lines, and nearly frightened to death some gipsies in the woods.

At dawn Deesa returned to the plantation. He had been very drunk indeed, and he expected to fall into trouble for outstaying his leave. He drew a long breath when he saw that the bungalow and the plantation were still uninjured ; for he knew something of Moti Guj's temper ; and reported himself with many lies and salaams. Moti Guj had gone to his pickets for breakfast. His night exercise had made him hungry.

'Call up your beast,' said the planter, and Deesa shouted in the mysterious elephant-language, that some mahouts believe came from China at the birth of the world, when elephants and not men were masters. Moti Guj heard and came. Elephants do not gallop. They move from spots at varying rates of speed. If an elephant wished to catch an

express train he could not gallop, but he could catch the train. Thus Moti Guj was at the planter's door almost before Chihun noticed that he had left his pickets. He fell into Deesa's arms trumpeting with joy, and the man and beast wept and slobbered over each other, and handled each other from head to heel to see that no harm had befallen.

'Now we will get to work,' said Deesa. 'Lift me up, my son and my joy.'

Moti Guj swung him up and the two went to the coffee-clearing to look for irksome stumps.

The planter was too astonished to be very angry.

## THE ROUT OF THE WHITE HUSSARS

It was not in the open fight  
We threw away the sword,  
But in the lonely watching  
In the darkness by the ford.  
The waters lapped, the night-wind blew,  
Full-armed the Fear was born and grew,  
And we were flying ere we knew  
From panic in the night.

*Beoni Bar.*

SOME people hold that an English Cavalry regiment cannot run. This is a mistake. I have seen four hundred and thirty-seven sabres flying over the face of the country in abject terror—have seen the best Regiment that ever drew bridle wiped off the Army List for the space of two hours. If you repeat this tale to the White Hussars they will, in all probability, treat you severely. They are not proud of the incident.

You may know the White Hussars by their 'side,' which is greater than that of all the Cavalry regiments on the roster. If this is not a sufficient mark, you may know them by their old brandy. It has been sixty years in the Mess and is worth going far to taste. Ask for the 'McGaire' old brandy, and see that you get it. If the Mess Sergeant thinks that you are uneducated, and that the genuine article will be lost on you, he will treat you accordingly. He is

a good man. But, when you are at Mess, you must never talk to your hosts about forced marches or long-distance rides. The Mess are very sensitive ; and, if they think that you are laughing at them, will tell you so.

As the White Hussars say, it was all the Colonel's fault. He was a new man, and he ought never to have taken the Command. He said that the Regiment was not smart enough. This to the White Hussars, who knew that they could walk round any Horse, and through any Guns, and over any Foot on the face of the earth ! That insult was the first cause of offence.

Then the Colonel cast the Drum-Horse—the Drum-Horse of the White Hussars ! Perhaps you do not see what an unspeakable crime he had committed. I will try to make it clear. The soul of the Regiment lives in the Drum-Horse who carries the silver kettle-drums. He is nearly always a big pie-bald Waler. That is a point of honour ; and a Regiment will spend anything you please on a pie-bald. He is beyond the ordinary laws of casting. His work is very light, and he only manœuvres at a footpace. Wherefore, so long as he can step out and look handsome, his well-being is assured. He knows more about the Regiment than the Adjutant, and could not make a mistake if he tried.

The Drum-Horse of the White Hussars was only eighteen years old, and perfectly equal to his duties. He had at least six years' more work in him, and carried himself with all the pomp and dignity of a Drum-Major of the Guards. The Regiment had paid twelve hundred rupees for him.

But the Colonel said that he must go, and he was cast in due form and replaced by a washy, bay beast, as ugly as a mule, with a ewe-neck, rat-tail, and cow-hocks. The Drummer detested that animal, and the rest of the Band-horses put back their ears and showed the whites of their eyes at the very sight of him. They knew him for an upstart and no gentleman. I fancy that the Colonel's ideas of smartness extended to the Band, and that he wanted to make it take part in the regular parade movements. A Cavalry Band is a sacred thing. It only turns out for Commanding Officers' parades, and the Band-Master is one degree more important than the Colonel. He is a High Priest and the 'Keel Row' is his holy song. The 'Keel Row' is the Cavalry Trot; and the man who has never heard that tune rising, high and shrill, above the rattle of the Regiment going past the saluting-base, has something yet to hear and understand.

When the Colonel cast the Drum-Horse of the White Hussars there was nearly a mutiny.

The officers were angry, the Regiment were furious, and the Bandsmen swore—like troopers. The Drum-Horse was going to be put up to auction—public auction—to be bought, perhaps, by a Parsee and put into a cart! It was worse than exposing the inner life of the Regiment to the whole world, or selling the Mess Plate to a Jew—a Black Jew.

The Colonel was a mean man and a bully. He knew what the Regiment thought about his action; and, when the troopers offered to buy the Drum-Horse, he said that their offer was mutinous and forbidden by the Regulations.

But one of the Subalterns—Hogan-Yale, an Irishman—bought the Drum-Horse for Rs. 160 at the sale ; and the Colonel was wroth. Yale professed repentance—he was unnaturally submissive—and said that, as he had only made the purchase to save the horse from possible ill-treatment and starvation, he would now shoot him and end the business. This appeared to soothe the Colonel, for he wanted the Drum-Horse disposed of. He felt that he had made a mistake, and could not of course acknowledge it. Meantime, the presence of the Drum-Horse was an annoyance to him.

Yale took to himself a glass of the old brandy, three cheroots, and his friend Martyn ; and they all left the Mess together. Yale and Martyn conferred for two hours in Yale's quarters ; but only the bull-terrier who keeps watch over Yale's boot-trees knows what they said. A horse, hooded and sheeted to his ears, left Yale's stables and was taken, very unwillingly, into the Civil Lines. Yale's groom went with him. Two men broke into the Regimental Theatre and took several paint-pots and some large scenery-brushes. Then night fell over the Cantonments, and there was a noise as of a horse kicking his loose-box to pieces in Yale's stables. Yale had a big, old, white Waler trap-horse.

The next day was a Thursday, and the men, hearing that Yale was going to shoot the Drum-Horse in the evening, determined to give the beast a regular regimental funeral—a finer one than they would have given the Colonel had he died just then. They got a bullock-cart and some sacking, and mounds and mounds of roses, and the body, under sacking, was



carried out to the place where the anthrax cases were cremated ; two-thirds of the Regiment following. There was no Band, but they all sang ' The Place where the old Horse died ' as something respectful and appropriate to the occasion. When the corpse was dumped into the grave and the men began throwing down armfuls of roses to cover it, the Farrier-Sergeant ripped out an oath and said aloud, ' Why, it ain't the Drum-Horse any more than it's me ! ' The Troop-Sergeant-Majors asked him whether he had left his head in the Canteen. The Farrier-Sergeant said that he knew the Drum-Horse's feet as well as he knew his own ; but he was silenced when he saw the regimental number burnt in on the poor stiff, upturned near-forefoot.

Thus was the Drum-Horse of the White Hussars buried ; the Farrier-Sergeant grumbling. The sack- ing that covered the corpse was smeared in places with black paint ; and the Farrier-Sergeant drew attention to this fact. But a Troop-Sergeant-Major kicked him severely on the shin, and told him that he was undoubtedly drunk.

On the Monday following the burial, the Colonel sought revenge on the White Hussars. Unfortunately, being at that time temporarily in command of the Station, he ordered a Brigade field-day. He said that he wished to make the Regiment ' sweat for their damned insolence,' and he carried out his notion thoroughly. That Monday was one of the hardest days in the memory of the White Hussars. They were thrown against a skeleton-enemy, and pushed forward, and withdrawn, and dismounted, and ' scientifically handled ' in every possible fashion

over dusty country, till they sweated profusely. Their only amusement came late in the day when they fell upon the battery of Horse Artillery and chased it for two miles. This was a personal question, and most of the troopers had money on the event ; the Gunners saying openly that they had the legs of the White Hussars. They were wrong. A march-past concluded the campaign, and when the Regiment got back to their Lines the men were coated with dirt from spur to chin-strap.

The White Hussars have one great and peculiar privilege. They won it at Fontenoy, I think.

Many regiments possess special rights, such as wearing collars with undress uniform, or a bow of riband between the shoulders, or red and white roses in their helmets on certain days of the year. Some rights are connected with regimental saints, and some with regimental successes. All are valued highly ; but none so highly as the right of the White Hussars to have the Band playing when their horses are being watered in the Lines. Only one tune is played, and that tune never varies. I don't know its real name, but the White Hussars call it, 'Take me to London again.' It sounds very pretty. The Regiment would sooner be struck off the roster than forgo their distinction.

After the 'dismiss' was sounded, the officers rode off home to prepare for stables ; and the men filed into the lines riding easy. That is to say, they opened their tight buttons, shifted their helmets, and began to joke or to swear as the humour took them ; the more careful slipping off and easing girths and curbs. A good trooper values his mount exactly

as much as he values himself, and believes, or should believe, that the two together are irresistible where women or men, girls or guns, are concerned.

Then the Orderly-Officer gave the order, 'Water horses,' and the Regiment loafed off to the squadron-troughs which were in rear of the stables, and between these and the barracks. There were four huge troughs, one for each squadron, arranged *en échelon*, so that the whole Regiment could water in ten minutes if it liked. But it lingered for seventeen, as a rule, while the Band played.

The Band struck up as the squadrons filed off to the troughs, and the men slipped their feet out of the stirrups and chaffed each other. The sun was just setting in a big, hot bed of red cloud, and the road to the Civil Lines seemed to run straight into the sun's eye. There was a little dot on the road. It grew and grew till it showed as a horse, with a sort of gridiron-thing on his back. The red cloud glared through the bars of the gridiron. Some of the troopers shaded their eyes with their hands and said—'What the mischief 'as that there 'orse got on 'im?'

In another minute they heard a neigh that every soul—horse and man—in the Regiment knew, and saw, heading straight towards the Band, the dead Drum-Horse of the White Hussars!

On his withers banged and bumped the kettle-drums draped in crape, and on his back, very stiff and soldierly, sat a bareheaded skeleton.

The Band stopped playing, and, for a moment, there was a hush.

Then some one in E Troop—men said it was the Troop-Sergeant-Major—swung his horse round and

yelled. No one can account exactly for what happened afterwards ; but it seems that, at least, one man in each troop set an example of panic, and the rest followed like sheep. The horses that had barely put their muzzles into the troughs reared and capered ; but as soon as the Band broke, which it did when the ghost of the Drum-Horse was about a furlong distant, all hooves followed suit, and the clatter of the stampede—quite different from the orderly throb and roar of a movement on parade, or the rough horse-play of watering in camp—made them only more terrified. They felt that the men on their backs were afraid of something. When horses once know that, all is over except the butchery.

Troop after troop turned from the troughs and ran—anywhere and everywhere—like spilt quicksilver. It was a most extraordinary spectacle, for men and horses were in all stages of easiness, and their gear flopping against their sides urged the horses on. Men were shouting and cursing, and trying to pull clear of the Band, which was being chased by the Drum-Horse, whose rider had fallen forward and seemed to be spurring for a wager.

The Colonel had gone over to the Mess for a drink. Most of the officers were with him, and the Subaltern of the Day was preparing to go down to the lines, and receive the watering reports from the Troop-Sergeant-Majors. When ‘Take me to London again’ stopped, after twenty bars, every one in the Mess said, ‘What on earth has happened?’ A minute later, they heard unmilitary noises, and saw, far across the plain, the White Hussars scattered and broken, and flying.

The Colonel was speechless with rage, for he thought that the Regiment had risen against him or was unanimously drunk. The Band, a disorganised mob, tore past, and at its heels laboured the Drum-Horse—the dead and buried Drum-Horse—with the jolting, clattering skeleton. Hogan-Yale whispered softly to Martyn—‘No wire will stand that treatment,’ and the Band, which had doubled like a hare, came back again. But the rest of the Regiment was gone, was rioting all over the Province, for the dusk had shut in, and each man was howling to his neighbour that the Drum-Horse was on his flank. Troop-horses are far too tenderly treated as a rule. They can, on emergencies, do a great deal, even with seventeen stone on their backs ; as the troopers found out.

How long this panic lasted I cannot say. I believe that when the moon rose the men saw they had nothing to fear, and, by twos and threes and half-troops, crept back into Cantonments very much ashamed of themselves. Meantime, the Drum-Horse, disgusted at his treatment by old friends, pulled up, wheeled round, and trotted up to the Mess verandah-steps for bread. No one liked to run ; but no one cared to go forward till the Colonel made a movement and laid hold of the skeleton’s foot. The Band had halted some distance away, and now came back slowly. The Colonel called it, individually and collectively, every evil name that occurred to him at the time ; for he had set his hand on the bosom of the Drum-Horse and found flesh and blood. Then he beat the kettle-drums with his clenched fist, and discovered that they were but made of silvered

paper and bamboo. Next, still swearing, he tried to drag the skeleton out of the saddle, but found that it had been wired into the cantle. The sight of the Colonel, with his arms round the skeleton's pelvis and his knee in the old Drum-Horse's stomach, was striking; not to say amusing. He worried the thing off in a minute or two, and threw it down on the ground, saying to the Band—'Here, you curs, that's what you're afraid of.' The skeleton did not look pretty in the twilight. The Band-Sergeant seemed to recognise it, for he began to chuckle and choke. 'Shall I take it away, sir?' said the Band-Sergeant. 'Yes,' said the Colonel, 'take it to Hell, and ride there yourselves!'

The Band-Sergeant saluted, hoisted the skeleton across his saddle-bow, and led off to the stables. Then the Colonel began to make inquiries for the rest of the Regiment, and the language he used was wonderful. He would disband the Regiment—he would court-martial every soul in it—he would not command such a set of rabble, and so on, and so on. As the men dropped in, his language grew wilder, until at last it exceeded the utmost limits of free speech allowed even to a Colonel of Horse.

Martyn took Hogan-Yale aside and suggested compulsory retirement from the Service as a necessity when all was discovered. Martyn was the weaker man of the two. Hogan-Yale put up his eyebrows and remarked, firstly, that he was the son of a Lord, and, secondly, that he was as innocent as the babe unborn of the theatrical resurrection of the Drum-Horse.

'My instructions,' said Yale, with a singularly

sweet smile, 'were that the Drum-Horse should be sent back as impressively as possible. I ask you, *am* I responsible if a mule-headed friend sends him back in such a manner as to disturb the peace of mind of a regiment of Her Majesty's Cavalry ?'

Martyn said, 'You are a great man, and will in time become a General ; but I'd give my chance of a troop to be safe out of this affair.'

Providence saved Martyn and Hogan-Yale. The Second-in-Command led the Colonel away to the little curtained alcove wherein the Subalterns of the White Hussars were accustomed to play poker of nights ; and there, after many oaths on the Colonel's part, they talked together in low tones. I fancy that the Second-in-Command must have represented the scare as the work of some trooper whom it would be hopeless to detect ; and I know that he dwelt upon the sin and the shame of making a public laughing-stock of the scare.

'They will call us,' said the Second-in-Command, who had really a fine imagination—'they will call us the "Fly-by-Nights" ; they will call us the "Ghost Hunters" ; they will nickname us from one end of the Army List to the other. All the explanation in the world won't make outsiders understand that the officers were away when the panic began. For the honour of the Regiment and for your own sake keep this thing quiet.'

The Colonel was so exhausted with anger that soothing him down was not so difficult as might be imagined. He was made to see, gently and by degrees, that it was obviously impossible to court-martial the whole Regiment, and equally impossible

to proceed against any subaltern who, in his belief, had any concern in the hoax.

‘But the beast’s alive ! He’s never been shot at all !’ shouted the Colonel. ‘It’s flat flagrant disobedience ! I’ve known a man broke for less—dam’ sight less. They’re mocking me, I tell you, Mut-man ! They’re mocking me !’

Once more the Second-in-Command set himself to soothe the Colonel, and wrestled with him for half an hour. At the end of that time the Regimental Sergeant-Major reported himself. The situation was rather novel to him ; but he was not a man to be put out by circumstances. He saluted and said, ‘Regiment all come back, sir.’ Then, to propitiate the Colonel—‘An’ none of the ’orses any the worse, sir.’

The Colonel only snorted and answered—‘You’d better tuck the men into their cots, then, and see that they don’t wake up and cry in the night.’ The Sergeant-Major withdrew.

His little stroke of humour pleased the Colonel, and, further, he felt slightly ashamed of the language he had been using. The Second-in-Command worried him again, and the two sat talking far into the night.

Next day but one there was a Commanding Officer’s parade, and the Colonel harangued the White Hussars vigorously. The pith of his speech was that, since the Drum-Horse in his old age had proved himself capable of cutting up the whole Regiment, he should return to his post of pride at the head of the Band, *but* the Regiment were a set of ruffians with bad consciences.

The White Hussars shouted, and threw everything movable about them into the air, and when the



parade was over they cheered the Colonel till they couldn't speak. No cheers were put up for Lieutenant Hogan-Yale, who smiled very sweetly in the background.

Said the Second-in-Command to the Colonel, unofficially—

'These little things ensure popularity, and do not the least affect discipline.'

'But I went back on my word,' said the Colonel.

'Never mind,' said the Second-in-Command. 'The White Hussars will follow you anywhere from to-day. Regiments are just like women. They will do anything for trinketry.'

A week later, Hogan-Yale received an extraordinary letter from some one who signed himself 'Secretary, *Charity and Zeal*, 3709, E. C.,' and asked for 'the return of our skeleton which we have reason to believe is in your possession.'

'Who the deuce is this lunatic who trades in bones?' said Hogan-Yale.

'Beg your pardon, sir,' said the Band-Sergeant, 'but the skeleton is with me, an' I'll return it if you'll pay the carriage into the Civil Lines. There's a coffin with it, Sir.'

Hogan-Yale smiled and handed two rupees to the Band-Sergeant, saying, 'Write the date on the skull, will you?'

If you doubt this story, and know where to go, you can see the date on the skeleton. But don't mention the matter to the White Hussars.

I happen to know something about it, because I prepared the Drum-Horse for his resurrection. He did not take kindly to the skeleton at all.

## THE FIRST SAILOR

*An Address delivered to some Junior Naval Officers  
of an East Coast Patrol: 1918*

ADMIRALS, Vice-Admirals and Rear-Admirals of the future—I am sorry for you. When you are at sea you are exposed to the exigencies of the Service, the harsh reprimands of your superiors, the malice of the King's enemies, and the Act of God. When you come ashore you endure, as you will this evening, the assaults of the civil population teaching you your own job. For instance, my lecture deals with the origin, evolution, and development from the earliest ages, of that packet of assorted miseries which we call a Ship. With my lecture will be included a succinct but accurate history of late Able Seaman, Leading Hand and Commander, Clarke, founder of the Royal Navy and the Mercantile Marine.

The late Commander Clarke flourished between fifteen and twenty thousand years ago, on a marshy island on the south side of a tidal estuary that faced East. Barring that he did not use patent medicines, daily papers, and similar modern excrescences, he was very like yourselves, though in a different rig. His wife, Mrs. Clarke, wove baskets out of reeds, and made eel-traps out of willows and osiers.

Neither of them knew that the river in front of them would be called the Thames, or that the island they inhabited would be called Sheer Necessity. But they knew what sheer necessity meant. It was sheer necessity for them to swim, spear salmon with flint-headed spears ; knock seals on the head with wooden clubs ; catch and trap fish ; dig for cockles with a flattened piece of wood like a paddle ; cure and dress skins ; and, above all, keep the home-fires burning in their mud and wood hut. This was easy, because the river brought down any amount of unrationed drift-wood from the great forests in the interior of England, and laid it almost at Nobby's door. He had only to swim out, get astride of a log, and paddle it ashore with the paddle he used for digging his cockles.

But he noticed that the logs nearly always turned over with him, and tipped him into the water. He didn't mind the duckings. What annoyed him was being ducked however well he balanced himself. He did not understand logs behaving as if they were alive. You see, for aught Nobby knew, logs might be alive. According to his religion, everything else was alive. The Winds were alive. The Tides were alive. He saw them being driven up and down the river by a God who lived in the Moon. The Sun was alive too. Nobby could see the exact place where he came out of his House under the Sea. The Sun lived at the End of the World which, as everybody in his world knew, was East of Margate Sands. If the God of the Ebb Tide caught you fishing too far out from the bank of the river, he carried you out to the End of the World, and you never came back

again, because you were burned up alive in the Sun's House. That was both Fact and Religion. But the logs and driftwood used to pass out of Thames mouth with the ebb, in long processions to the End of the World ; and Nobby noticed that many of those very same logs would come back again with the flood, not even charred! This proved to him that the logs knew some sort of magic which he didn't—otherwise how could they get back from the House where the Sun rose without being burned up? That was Logic. At last he spoke about it to the High Priest of his tribe, and asked him whether a man could go and come as the logs did. The High Priest laughed and quoted an ancient saying of the Tribe when young men boasted or children wanted something they couldn't get. 'Wait a bit !' he said. 'As soon as the Stick marries the Basket, you'll get to the World's End and back—won't you ?' That is a silly saying, isn't it ? It's almost as silly as the old music-hall chorus that used to be sung in London ever so long ago :

When the Pigs begin to fly  
Oh, won't the pork be high ?  
And we'll send old maids to Parliament—  
When ?—  
When the Pigs begin to fly.

Now, you may have noticed, gentlemen, that the Pig, as represented by the Hun, *has* begun to fly. At the same time, the vote is being given to the ladies, whom we shall see at Westminster anon ; and I need not draw the attention of any Gun-room officer to the present scandalous price of tinned sausages. This shows that, though many a proph-

ecy turns out to be a joke, some jokes—specially in the Service—become prophecies.

So it was in Nobby's case. He didn't know what you and I know about the Doctrine of Evolution. *He* didn't know that the Stick, which the High Priest talked about, represented the single log which is the Father of all dug-out makee-paddloes, such as West African canoes, and the whole breed of rafts, praus, catamarans, and outriggers from Dakar to Malaysia ; or that the Basket is the Mother of all built-up shipping that has a keel and ribs—from the kayak, junk, and dhow, dromond, bus, caravel, carrack, and Seventy-Four, to the modern transatlantic liner, now on convoy-duty, the overworked and under-gunned sloop, the meritorious but damp destroyer and *sea-sick omnes*, throughout all the oceans. Such considerations did not weigh with him. Being a simple soul, he was merely annoyed with those logs that turned over beneath him ; and he was puzzled over the logs that went to the End of the World and back again.

One day when he was retrieving his firewood as usual, he saw a log drift past that took his fancy. He swam out and straddled it, making ready to balance if it turned over. But it didn't. For the first time in the history of mankind, Nobby felt the gentle roll and recover of a ballasted keel beneath him. He leaned to port and starboard to make sure. *Still* the log didn't turn over. Why ? Because it had been a small stunted tree growing on a sou'-western exposure which had bent it over to the north-east, thus giving the trunk a pleasing sheer at the bows. To steady itself against prevailing

winds, the tree had wrapped its roots round a big boulder. Then a gale had torn it out of the bank it grew on, hundreds of miles up the river, and it had drifted down to the sea, rubbing and scraping on gravel and sandbars till there was hardly any trace left of its branches. But the tough old roots were still firmly wrapped round the boulder, and the log, therefore, floated more or less plumb.

As far as we can make out, the earliest steps of invention, like those of promotion, are mostly due to accident taken advantage of by the observant mind. Accident, Providence, or Joss had presented the observant Nobby with the Mother-model, so to speak, of all the ships that would be built hereafter. But all that Nobby knew was that, at last, he had found a log which didn't roll over, and he meant to keep it. Therefore he made his wife put raw-hide lashings over the boulder among the roots so that the boulder should not drop out or shift. They greased the lashings, of course, the same way as they greased themselves with seal-oil when they went swimming, because grease keeps out wet. For the same reason they greased the whole log except along the top where they wanted to take hold of it. As they rubbed the stuff in, they scraped smooth, with shell and flint scrapers, all knots and bumps where the branches had been. Later on—it may have been weeks, it may have been months or years—it occurred to Nobby to hollow out the log so as he could sit *in* it comfortably, instead of *on* it. So he and his wife put red-hot ashes on the top, surrounded them with a little mud, and scraped away the wood as it charred. Bit by bit, they burned and scraped out as much

of the inside of the log as they wanted. Nobby didn't know where the buoyancy of a boat ought to be, but he liked to stretch his legs out in the well.

Then, he and his wife went out paddling very cautiously up and down the marshes behind them, or very close to the bank of the big river. Naturally, they were afraid of the God of the Tide carrying them off to the End of the World and burning them alive in the Sun's House. All the same Nobby's eyes used to flicker sometimes towards the End of the World in the direction of Margate Sands where the Sun lived and where the logs went.

One moonlight night in April or May, B. C. fourteen thousand nine hundred odd, Nobby showed the High Priest how Mrs. Clarke had woven a sort of basket-work back-rest in and out of what was left of the roots at the stern of the log, and how he had covered it with seal-skin to keep water from slopping down his back. As a matter of fact, it was the first dim idea of a poop and sternworks that the mind of man had conceived. Nobby had made it for his own comfort—the way most inventions are made.

The High Priest looked at it. 'Ah!' he said. 'It strikes *me* that the Stick is beginning to marry the Basket.' 'In that case,' said Nobby very quickly, 'what about me going to the End of the World?' 'Officially,' said the High Priest, 'I can't countenance any such action, because you would be officially burned up by the Sun when he got out of bed, and I should have to damn your soul officially afterwards. Unofficially, of course, if *I* were your age I'd have a shot at it.'

I merely mention this conversation to show you

that general instructions throwing the entire responsibility of the accident on the Watch Officer, while leaving the Post Captain without a stain on his character at the ensuing Court of Enquiry, were not unknown even in that remote age.

Then Nobby went home, where his wife was putting the children to bed, with a long lie about having to look after an eel-trap down the river. Mrs. Clarke said : ' So the High Priest has talked you into it, has he ? Let me tuck the babies up and I'll come too.'

So they pushed off about midnight, paddling in the slack water. They hugged the shore all along the Columbine, past Nayland Rock to Longnose Ridge—one fool-man and one devoted woman on a twenty-five-foot long log, forty-two inches extreme beam, and ten inches freeboard, bound, as they thought, for the End of the World—and back, if they weren't burned up alive by the God of the Sun *en route*. The ebb took them, at dawn, three or four miles beyond the North Foreland. There was a bit of a swell from the east, and when their log topped the long smooth ridges they saw the red-hot glare of the Sun God coming up out of his House. That panicked them ! By great good luck, however, he rose two miles ahead of them. If they had paddled a little harder during the night, they would have been right on top of him. But he got up at a safe distance, and began climbing the sky as usual, and left those terrific rolling waters emptier than ever. Then they wanted to go home. They had lost the North Foreland in the morning haze ; they had lost their heads ; they would have lost their paddles



if those hadn't been lashed. They had lost everything except the instinct that told them to keep the Sun at their backs and dig out. They dug out till they dripped—the first human beings who had ever come back from the End of the World. At last they reached Garrison Point again, white with the salt that had dried on them, their backs and shoulders aching like toothache, their eyes a foot deep in their heads, and the flesh on their bones ribbed and sodden with the wet. Can you imagine such feelings? When Nobby limped up the beach, Mrs. Nobby said: 'Now I hope you are satisfied!'

Being a married man, Nobby told her he would never do it again. *But*, being the father of all sailormen, he was down on the beach next day, studying how to tune up his boat for her next cruise. Never forget that, as far back as we can trace it, the mind of primitive man was much the same as yours or mine. He knew he lived under a law of cause and effect. But, since a good many of the causes of things were unknown to him, he was rather astonished at some of the effects. So was Nobby a day or two later. While they were overhauling the canoe after its desperate voyage, it occurred to them it might be a good notion to lace a covering over the well to keep the water out. First they cleared everything out of the well, and in doing so lashed the spare paddle to the left-hand side of the poop, where it hung down like a dagger with its broad blade in the water. Then they fetched out a three-cornered skin of scraped sealgut, sewn together with sinew, which Mrs. Nobby had meant to make into slickers for family use. Nobby sat down

aft, holding one corner of the skin, while Mrs. Nobby went forward to about midships, put her foot on another corner of the skin to steady it, and held the third corner up to the full stretch of her arm above her head. While they were thus measuring the triangle of shining water-tight, wind-tight stuff, all puffed out by the breeze that was blowing from their left side, the canoe began to heel and slide. Nobby grabbed the head of the spare paddle on the left side of the boat, to steady himself, and drew it towards him. The canoe ran on across the wind to the full length of her mooring-thong, and fetched up with a jerk. Now this was a reversal of every law Nobby had ever worked under, because it was axiomatic that the God of the Wind only pushed one way. If you stood on two logs lashed together, and held out your cloak with both arms, and set your feet on the lower ends of it, the God of whichever Wind was blowing at the time would push you straight in front of him. Nothing else was possible or conceivable. Yet here was his boat moving across the path of the sou'-west breeze ! There couldn't be any mistake, because Nobby pointed it off on his fingers. He didn't know that the natural opening between the first and second fingers of a man's hand is eleven and one-quarter degrees ; but he *did* know that if you pointed your first finger, holding your third and fourth fingers down with your thumb, into the eye of anything, and watched where your second finger pointed, and began again at that point with your first finger, and so on round the horizon (which was just thirty-two jabs) you could measure off the distance in finger-points between

your first mark and where you were going. In this case, there were about seven of his finger-points between the Sou'-West wind's eye and the canoe's track. To make quite sure, he unmoored, carefully repeated the motions, got Mrs. Nobby to hold the skin again, pulled the head of the paddle towards him when the wind puffed; and the boat slid off for almost a quarter of a mile at right angles to the wind.

Nobby paddled back, more scared than when he had gone to the World's End, and went to see the High Priest about it. The High Priest explained like a book. He said that Nobby finding a log which didn't turn over with him; and his getting to the World's End and back on it, without being burned up by the Sun; *and* this last miracle of the Wind, coming on top of the other two, proved that Nobby was beloved by all the Gods of Tide, Sun, and Wind, *and* the Log that carried him.

'I hope that's the case,' said Nobby, who was modest by nature. 'But the next time I go foreign I shall hoist that skin on a stick and have both hands free for miracles in case the Gods spring any more.' Accordingly, he stuck a stick in a hole that he had burned out in the log a little forward of midships, and on the principle that you can't have too much of a good thing, he hung up another three-cornered sail in front of the first, and fastened one of its corners down to the nose of the boat. But as the free corner flapped about too much, Nobby got Mrs. Nobby to sew a thong to it, and led the thong aft to the well, so that he could stop the flapping by pulling on it. Then, the miracles began in earnest! For

months and months Nobby never knew when he hoisted those two triangular skins—the first fore-and-aft sails in the world—what the log and the God of the Wind, and the paddle, and the strings of the sails, were going to do next. And when the God of the Tide took a hand in the circus, Nobby's hair stood on end. One day, everything would go beautifully. The God of the Tide on his lee-bow would make the old log look up almost within six finger-points of the wind; and Nobby would skim along at the rate of knots, thinking he'd found out all about it at last. Next day, with a lee-going tide, he would find the canoe bumping broadside on to every shoal he'd ever guessed at, and dozens that he hadn't. Sails, wind, tide, steering—everything—was an incomprehensible wonder, which generally ended in an upset. He had nothing but his own experience to guide him, *plus* the certainty of something happening every time that he took liberties with the Gods. And he didn't know when he *had* taken a liberty till he was tipped out of the boat. But he stuck to his job, and in time he trained his eldest son to help him, till, after years and years of every sort of accident and weather, and hard work and hard thinking and wet lying, he mastered the second of the Two Greatest Mysteries in the world—he understood the Way of a Ship on the Sea.

One fine day in autumn, with a north-west wind and good visibility, the High Priest came to him and said: 'I wish you'd slip up the hill with me for a minute, and give me your opinion of the view.' Nobby came at once, and when they got to Pigtail Corner, the Priest pointed to a square sail off the

tail of the Mouse Shoal, some few miles away, and said : ' What do you make of *that* ? '

Nobby looked hard ; then he said : ' That's not a *ship*. It's one of those dam' barbarians from Harwich. They scull about there in any sort of coffin.' The Priest said : ' What are you going to do about it ? '

' I'm going to have a look at him presently,' said Nobby, screwing up his eyes. ' Meantime, it's slack water and he's crossing the Knob Channel before the wind, because he don't know how to navigate otherwise. But in a little while, the God of the Ebb will carry him out towards the End of the World. Then he'll panic, same as I did ; and he'll dig out pretty hard to close the land. But it's *my* impression the God of the Ebb Tide will defeat him, and he'll spend most of the night between the land and the World's End, paddling like a duck with the cramps. If he's lucky, he'll be brought back again by the God of the Flood Tide. But *then*, if this Nor'-West wind holds, he'll find the God of the Wind fighting the God of the Flood every foot of the way ; and he'll be put to it to keep his end up in that lop. If he isn't drowned, he'll be rather fatigued. I ought to pick him up when the Sun gets out of bed to-morrow, somewhere between Margate Sands and the End of the World—probably off the South Shingles.'

' That's very interesting,' said the High Priest, ' but what does it mean exactly ? '

' Well,' said Nobby, ' it means exactly that I've got to beat to windward most of this night on a lee-going tide, which, with all respect to the Gods, is

the most sanguinary awkward combination *I* know ; and if I don't hit mud more than a dozen times between here and the South Shingles, I shall think myself lucky. But don't let that spoil your sleep, old man.'

'No, I won't,' said the High Priest. 'Go and keep your ceaseless vigil in your lean grey hull and—and—I'll pray for you.'

Nobby didn't even say 'Thank you.' He went down to the beach where his eldest son was waiting with the boat.

'Bite loose the behind-end string,' says Nobby, signifying in his language : 'Let go the stern-fast.'

'Very good, sir,' says the boy, gnashing his teeth. 'Where are we going, Dad?'

'The Gods only know,' says Nobby. 'But *I* know that if we aren't off the South Shingles when the Sun gets out of bed to-morrow, *your* leave's stopped, for one.'

By these arbitrary and unfeeling means was discipline and initiative originally inculcated in the Senior Service.

That cruise was all that Nobby had told the High Priest it would be, and a good deal more. As long as the light lasted he moved along fairly well, but after dark he was doing business alone with the Gods of the Wind and the Tide, and the sails and the strings (which naturally fouled), in an unbuoyed, unlighted estuary, chockful of shoals and flats and rips and knocks and wedges and currents and overfalls ; also densely populated with floating trees and logs carrying no lights, adrift at every angle. *Can* you imagine anything like it, gentlemen, in all your

experience? When they had collided with their fifth floating oak, Nobby calls forward to ask his son whether he was enjoying pleasant dreams, or what else.

'But I can't *see* 'em,' says the child, wiping his nose with the back of his hand.

'See 'em!' says Nobby. 'Who the Hell expects you to see 'em on a night like this? You've got to *smell* 'em, my son.'

Thus early, gentlemen, was the prehistoric and perishing Watch Officer inducted into the mysteries of his unpleasing trade.

So Nobby threshed along as he best could, praying to every God he knew not to set him too far to leeward when the Sun rose. And the object he was sweating his soul and carcase out for, was the one object that all his legitimate and illegitimate descendants on the seas have sweated for ever since—to get to windward of the enemy. When day broke, he found himself a couple of miles or so south-east of the South Shingles, with Margate Sands somewhere on his right, and the End of the World ahead of him glowing redder and redder as the Sun rose. He couldn't have explained how he got there, any more than he could have explained what made him lie just there, waiting for his Harwich friend, and thumping and hammering in the bubble of the wind against the tide.

In due course, the flood brought up a big ship—fifteen foot by eight if she was an inch—made of wickerwork covered with skins. She sat low with two men trying to paddle her, and two more trying to bale. Nobby came down wind, and rammed her at the unheard-of velocity of four point two knots.

She heeled over, and while the boy, who was a destructive young devil, stabbed at her skin-plating with his spear, Nobby drove his porpoise-harpoon, with line attached, in among the crew, and through her bilge. Next minute, his canoe was riding head to wind, moored by his harpoon-line to the rim of the basket flush with the water, just as the big skin square-sail floated out of her, neatly blanketing seventy-five per cent of her personnel. A minute later, the boy had hit one surviving head in the water, Nobby had cut his line, and—the first naval engagement in English history was finished, and the first English Commander was moaning over loss of stores expended in action. (Because Nobby knew he'd have to account for that harpoon and line at home.) Then he got the God of the Wind on his right side, hit land somewhere between Margate Sands and Westgate-on-Sea, and came along the shore under easy paddle to Garrison Point ; the boy talking very hard and excited.

There not being any newspapers in those days, he told the High Priest exactly what he had done, and drew battle-charts in the mud with a stick, giving his courses, which were roughly North-East ; then South-East ; and Westerly homeward after the action.

'Well,' said the High Priest, '*I don't pretend to understand navigation, but N.E.S.E.W. means No Enemy Sails English Waters. That's as plain as print. It looks to me, though, as if you've started a bigger game than you've any idea of. Do I understand that you followed your enemy to the End of the World and drowned him there ?*'



‘Yes ; but that wasn’t *my* fault,’ said Nobby. ‘He went there first. He hadn’t any business in my water.’

‘Quite so,’ said the High Priest, ‘but that’s only the beginning of it.’

‘Well,’ said Nobby, ‘what’s going to be the end of it ? What’ll happen to *me*, for instance ?’

‘I’ll tell you,’ said the High Priest, and he began to prophesy in the irritating way that civilians do. ‘You’ll have a hard wet life and your sons after you. When you aren’t being worried by the sea or your enemies, you’ll be worried by your own tribe, teaching you your own job.’

‘*That’s* nothing new,’ said Nobby. ‘Carry on !’

‘You’ll win the world without anyone *caring* how you did it : you’ll keep the world without anyone *knowing* how you did it : and you’ll carry the world on your backs without anyone *seeing* how you did it. But neither you nor your sons will get anything out of that little job except Four Gifts—one for the Sea, one for the Wind, one for the Sun, and one for the Ship that carries you.’

‘Well, I’m glad there will be some advantages connected with the Service. I haven’t discovered ’em yet,’ said Nobby.

‘Yes,’ said the Priest. ‘You and your sons after you will be long in the head, slow in the tongue, heavy in the hand, *and*—as you were yesterday at the World’s End—always a little bit to windward. That you can count on for ever and ever and ever.’

‘That’ll come in handy for the boy,’ said Nobby. ‘He didn’t do so badly in our little affair yesterday.’

But what about this Stick-and-Basket pidgin you're always hinting at ?'

'There's no end to what happens when the Stick marries the Basket,' said the High Priest. 'There will only be another beginning and a fresh start. Your logs will grow as high as hills and as long as villages, and as wide as rivers. And when they are at their highest and longest and widest, they'll all get up in the air and fly.'

'That's a bad look-out for the boy,' said Nobby. 'I've only brought him up to the sea-trade.'

'Live easy and die easy as far as that is concerned,' said the High Priest. 'For, winning the world, and keeping the world, and carrying the world on their backs—on land, or on sea, or in the air—your sons will always have the Four Gifts. Long-headed and slow-spoken and heavy—damned heavy—in the hand, will they be ; and always and always a little bit to windward of every enemy—that they may be a safeguard to all who pass on the seas on their lawful occasions.'

## JUDSON AND THE EMPIRE

Gloriana ! The Don may attack us  
Whenever his stomach be fain ;  
He must reach us before he can rack us . . .  
And where are the galleons of Spain ?

DOBSON.

ONE of the many beauties of a democracy is its almost superhuman skill in developing troubles with other countries and finding its honour abraded in the process. A true democracy has a large contempt for all other lands that are governed by Kings and Queens and Emperors ; and knows little and thinks less of their internal affairs. All it regards is its own dignity, which is its King, Queen, and Knave. So, sooner or later, its international differences end in the common people, who have no dignity, shouting the common abuse of the street, which also has no dignity, across the seas in order to vindicate their new dignity. The consequences may or may not be war ; but the chances do not favour peace.

One advantage in living in a civilised land which is really governed lies in the fact that all the Kings and Queens and Emperors of the Continent are closely related by blood or marriage ; are, in fact, one large family. A wise head among them knows that what appears to be a studied insult may be no more than some man's indigestion or woman's indis-

position, to be treated as such, and explained by quiet talk. Again, a popular demonstration, headed by King and Court, may mean nothing more than that so-and-so's people are out of hand for the minute. When a horse falls to kicking in a hunt-crowd at a gate, the rider does not dismount, but puts his open hand behind him, and the others draw aside. It is so with the rulers of men. In the old days they cured their own and their people's bad temper with fire and slaughter ; but now that the fire is so long of range and the slaughter so large, they do other things ; and few among their people guess how much they owe of mere life and money to what the slang of the minute calls ' puppets ' and ' luxuries.'

Once upon a time there was a little Power, the half-bankrupt wreck of a once great empire, that lost its temper with England, the whipping-boy of all the world, and behaved, as every one said, most scandalously. But it is not generally known that that Power fought a pitched battle with England and won a glorious victory. The trouble began with the people. Their own misfortunes had been many, and for private rage it is always refreshing to find a vent in public swearing. Their national vanity had been deeply injured, and they thought of their ancient glories and the days when their fleets had first rounded the Cape of Storms, and their own newspapers called upon Camoens and urged them to extravagances. It was the gross, smooth, sleek, lying England that was checking their career of colonial expansion. They assumed at once that their ruler was in league with England, so they cried with great heat that they would forthwith become a

Republic and colonially expand themselves as a free people should. This made plain, the people threw stones at the English Consuls and spat at English ladies, and cut off drunken sailors of Our fleet in their ports and hammered them with oars, and made things very unpleasant for tourists at their Customs, and threatened awful deaths to the consumptive invalids of Madeira, while the junior officers of the army drank fruit-extracts and entered into most blood-curdling conspiracies against their monarch ; all with the object of being a Republic. Now the history of the South American Republics shows that it is not good that Southern Europeans should be also Republicans. They glide too quickly into military despotism ; and the propping of men against walls and shooting them in detachments can be arranged much more economically and with less effect on the death-rate by a hide-bound monarchy. Still the performances of the Power as represented by its people were extremely inconvenient. It was the kicking horse in the crowd, and probably the rider explained that he could not check it. So the people enjoyed all the glory of war with none of the risks, and the tourists who were stoned in their travels returned stolidly to England and told the *Times* that the police arrangements of foreign towns were defective.

This, then, was the state of affairs north the Line. South it was more strained, for there the Powers were at direct issue : England, unable to go back because of the pressure of adventurous children behind her, and the actions of far-away adventurers who would not come to heel, but offering to buy out

her rival ; and the other Power, lacking men or money, stiff in the conviction that three hundred years of slave-holding and intermingling with the nearest natives gave an inalienable right to hold slaves and issue half-castes to all eternity. They had built no roads. Their towns were rotting under their hands ; they had no trade worth the freight of a crazy steamer ; and their sovereignty ran almost one musket-shot inland when things were peaceful. For these very reasons they raged all the more, and the things that they said and wrote about the manners and customs of the English would have driven a younger nation to the guns with a long red bill for wounded honour.

It was then that Fate sent down in a twin-screw shallow-draft gunboat, of some 270 tons displacement, designed for the defence of rivers, Lieutenant Harrison Edward Judson, to be known for the future as Bai-Jove-Judson. His type of craft looked exactly like a flat-iron with a match stuck up in the middle ; it drew five feet of water or less ; carried a four-inch gun forward, which was trained by the ship ; and, on account of its persistent rolling, was, to live in, three degrees worse than a torpedo-boat. When Judson was appointed to take charge of the thing on her little trip of six or seven thousand miles southward, his first remark as he went to look her over in dock was, ' Bai Jove, that topmast wants staying forward ! ' The topmast was a stick about as thick as a clothes-prop ; but the flat-iron was Judson's first command, and he would not have exchanged his position for second post in the *Anson* or the *Howe*. He navigated her, under convoy,

tenderly and lovingly to the Cape (the story of the topmast came with him), and he was so absurdly in love with his wallowing wash-tub when he reported himself, that the Admiral of the station thought it would be a pity to kill a new man on her, and allowed Judson to continue in his unenvied rule.

The Admiral visited her once in Simon's Bay, and she was bad, even for a flat-iron gunboat, strictly designed for river and harbour defence. She sweated clammy drops of dew between decks in spite of a preparation of powdered cork that was sprinkled over her inside paint. She rolled in the long Cape swell like a buoy ; her foc's'le was a dog-kennel ; Judson's cabin was practically under the water-line ; not one of her dead-lights could ever be opened ; and her compasses, thanks to the influence of the four-inch gun, were a curiosity even among Admiralty compasses. But Bai-Jove-Judson was radiant and enthusiastic. He had even contrived to fill Mr. Davies, the second-class engine-room artificer, who was his chief engineer, with the glow of his passion. The Admiral, who remembered his own first command, when pride forbade him to slack off a single rope on a dewy night, and he had racked his rigging to pieces in consequence, looked at the flat-iron keenly. Her fenders were done all over with white sennit, which was truly white ; her big gun was varnished with a better composition than the Admiralty allowed ; the spare sights were cased as carefully as the chronometers ; the chocks for spare spars, two of them, were made of four-inch Burma teak carved with dragons' heads (that was one result of Bai-Jove-Judson's experiences with the Naval

Brigade in the Burmese war), the bow-anchor was varnished instead of being painted, and there were charts other than the Admiralty scale supplied. The Admiral was well pleased, for he loved a ship's husband—a man who had a little money of his own and was willing to spend it on his command. Judson looked at him hopefully. He was only a Junior Navigating Lieutenant under eight years' standing. He might be kept in Simon's Bay for six months, and his ship at sea was his delight. The dream of his heart was to enliven her dismal official grey with a line of gold-leaf and, perhaps, a little scroll-work at her blunt barge-like bows.

'There's nothing like a first command, is there?' said the Admiral, reading his thoughts. 'You seem to have rather queer compasses though. Better get them adjusted.'

'It's no use, sir,' said Judson. 'The gun would throw out the Pole itself. But—but I've got the hang of most of the weaknesses.'

'Will you be good enough to lay that gun over thirty degrees, please?' The gun was put over. Round and round and round went the needle merrily, and the Admiral whistled.

'You must have kept close to your convoy?'

'Saw her twice between here and Madeira, sir,' said Judson with a flush, for he resented the slur on his seamanship. 'She's—she's a little out of hand now, but she will settle down after a while.'

The Admiral went over the side, according to the rules of the Service, but the Staff-Captain must have told the other men of the squadron in Simon's Bay, for they one and all made light of the flat-iron for



many days. 'What can you shake out of her, Judson?' said the Lieutenant of the *Mongoose*, a real white-painted ram-bow gunboat with quick-firing guns, as he came into the upper verandah of the little naval Club overlooking the dockyard one hot afternoon. It is in that Club, as the captains come and go, that you hear all the gossip of all the Seven Seas.

'Ten point four,' said Bai-Jove-Judson.

'Ah! That was on her trial trip. She's too much by the head now. I told you staying that topmast would throw her out.'

'You leave my top-hamper alone,' said Judson, for the joke was beginning to pall on him.

'Oh, my soul! Listen to him. Juddy's top-hamper. Keate, have you heard of the flat-iron's top-hamper? You're to leave it alone. Commodore Judson's feelings are hurt.'

Keate was the Torpedo Lieutenant of the big *Vortigern*, and he despised small things. 'His top-hamper,' said he slowly. 'Oh, ah, yes, of course. Juddy, there's a shoal of mullet in the bay, and I think they're foul of your screws. Better go down, or they'll carry away something.'

'I don't let things carry away as a rule. You see I've no Torpedo Lieutenant aboard, thank God.'

Keate within the past week had so managed to bungle the slinging-in of a small torpedo-boat on the *Vortigern*, that the boat had broken the crutches on which she rested, and was herself being repaired in the dockyard under the Club windows.

'One for you, Keate. Never mind, Juddy, you're hereby appointed dockyard-tender for the next three

years, and if you're very good and there's no sea on, you shall take me round the harbour. Waitabeechee, Commodore. What'll you take? Vanderhum for the "Cook and the captain bold, And the mate o' the *Nancy* brig, And the bo'sun tight" [Juddy, put that cue down or I'll put you under arrest for insulting the lieutenant of a real ship], "And the midship-mite, And the crew of the captain's gig."

By this time Judson had pinned him in a corner, and was prodding him with the half-butt. The Admiral's Secretary entered, and saw the scuffle from the door.

'Ouch! Juddy, I apologise. Take that—er—topmast of yours away! Here's the man with the bow-string. I wish I were a Staff-Captain instead of a bloody lootenant. Sperril sleeps below every night. That's what makes Sperril tumble home from the waist upwards. Sperril, I defy you to touch me. I'm under orders for Zanzibar. Probably I shall annex it!'

'Judson, the Admiral wants to see you!' said the Staff-Captain, disregarding the scoffer of the *Mongoose*.

'I told you you'd be a dockyard-tender yet, Juddy. A side of fresh beef to-morrow and three dozen snapper on ice. On ice, you understand, Juddy?'

Bai-Jove-Judson and the Staff-Captain went out together.

'Now, what does the old man want with Judson?' said Keate from the bar.

'Don't know. Juddy's a damned good fellow, though. I wish to goodness he was in the *Mongoose* with us.'

The Lieutenant of the *Mongoose* dropped into a chair and read the mail-papers for an hour. Then he saw Bai-Jove-Judson in the street and shouted to him. Judson's eyes were very bright and his figure was held very straight, and he moved joyously. Except for the Lieutenant of the *Mongoose*, the Club was empty.

'Juddy, there will be a beautiful row,' said that young man when he had heard the news delivered in an undertone. 'You'll probably have to fight, and yet I can't see what the old man's thinking of to——'

'My orders are not to have a row under any circumstances,' said Judson.

'Go-look-see? That all? When do you go?'

'To-night if I can. I must go down and see about things. I say, I may want a few men for the day.'

'Anything in the *Mongoose* is at your service. There's my gig come over now. I know that coast, dead, drunk, or asleep, and you'll need all the knowledge you can get. If it had only been us two together! Come along with me.'

For one whole hour Judson remained closeted in the stern cabin of the *Mongoose*, listening, poring over chart upon chart and taking notes, and for an hour the marine at the door heard nothing but things like these: 'Now you'll have to lie in here if there's any sea on. That current is ridiculously underestimated, and it sets *west* at this season of the year, remember. Their boats never come south of this, see? So it's no good looking out for them.' And so on and so forth, while Judson lay at length on the locker by the three-pounder, and smoked and absorbed it all.

Next morning there was no flat-iron in Simon's Bay ; only a little smudge of smoke off Cape Hang-clip to show that Mr. Davies, the second-class engine-room artificer, was giving her all she could carry. At the Admiral's house the ancient and retired bo'sun, who had seen many Admirals come and go, brought out his paint and brushes and gave a new coat of pure raw pea-green to the two big cannon-balls that stand one on each side of the Admiral's entrance-gate. He felt dimly that great events were stirring.

And the flat-iron, constructed, as has been before said, solely for the defence of rivers, met the great roll off Cape Agulhas and was swept from end to end, and sat upon her twin screws, and leaped as gracefully as a cow in a bog from one sea to another, till Mr. Davies began to fear for the safety of his engines, and the Kroo boys that made the majority of the crew were deathly sick. She ran along a very badly-lighted coast, past bays that were no bays, where ugly flat-topped rocks lay almost level with the water, and very many extraordinary things happened that have nothing to do with the story, but they were all duly logged by Bai-Jove-Judson.

At last the coast changed and grew green and low and exceedingly muddy, and there were broad rivers whose bars were little islands standing three or four miles out at sea, and Bai-Jove-Judson hugged the shore more closely than ever, remembering what the Lieutenant of the *Mongoose* had told him. Then he found a river full of the smell of fever and mud, with green stuff growing far into its waters, and a current that made the flat-iron gasp and grunt.

'We will turn up here,' said Bai-Jove-Judson, and

they turned up accordingly ; Mr. Davies wondering what in the world it all meant, and the Kroo boys grinning merrily. Bai-Jove-Judson went forward to the bows and meditated, staring through the muddy waters. After two hours of rooting through this desolation at an average rate of five miles an hour, his eyes were cheered by the sight of one white buoy in the coffee-hued mid-stream. The flat-iron crept up to it cautiously, and a leadsman took soundings all round it from a dinghy, while Bai-Jove-Judson smoked and thought, with his head on one side.

‘About seven feet, isn’t there?’ said he. ‘That must be the tail-end of the shoal. There’s four fathom in the fairway. Knock that buoy down with axes. I don’t think it’s picturesque, somehow.’ The Kroo men hacked the wooden sides to pieces in three minutes, and the mooring-chain sank with the last splinters of wood. Bai-Jove-Judson laid the flat-iron carefully over the site, while Mr. Davies watched, biting his nails nervously.

‘Can you back her against this current?’ said Bai-Jove-Judson. Mr. Davies could, inch by inch, but only inch by inch, and Bai-Jove-Judson stood in the bows and gazed at various things on the bank as they came into line or opened out. The flat-iron dropped down over the tail of the shoal, exactly where the buoy had been, and backed once more before Bai-Jove-Judson was satisfied. Then they went upstream for half an hour, put into shoal-water by the bank and waited, with a slip-rope on the anchor.

‘Seems to me,’ said Mr. Davies deferentially, ‘like as if I heard some one a-firing off at intervals, so to say.’

There was beyond doubt a dull mutter in the air.

'Seems to me,' said Bai-Jove-Judson, 'as if I heard a screw. Stand by to slip moorings.'

Another ten minutes passed and the beat of engines grew plainer. Then round the bend of the river came a remarkably prettily-built white-painted gunboat with a blue and white flag bearing a red boss in the centre.

'Unshackle abaft the windlass ! Stream both buoys ! Easy astern. Let go, all !' The slip-rope flew out, the two buoys bobbed in the water to mark where anchor and cable had been left, and the flat-iron waddled out into midstream with the White Ensign at her one mast-head.

'Give her all you can. That thing has the legs of us,' said Judson. 'And down we go.'

'It's war—bloody war ! He's going to fire,' said Mr. Davies, looking up through the engine-room hatch.

The white gunboat without a word of explanation fired three guns at the flat-iron, cutting the trees on the banks into green chips. Bai-Jove-Judson was at the wheel, and Mr. Davies and the current helped the boat to an almost respectable degree of speed.

It was an exciting chase, but it did not last for more than five minutes. The white gunboat fired again, and Mr. Davies in his engine-room gave a wild shout.

'What's the matter ? Hit ?' said Bai-Jove-Judson.

'No, I've just seized of your roos-de-gare. Beg y' pardon, sir.'

'Right O ! Just the half a fraction of a point

more.' The wheel turned under the steady hand, as Bai-Jove-Judson watched his marks on the bank falling in line swiftly as troops anxious to aid. The flat-iron smelt the shoal-water under her, checked for an instant, and went on. 'Now we're over. Come along, you thieves, there !' said Judson.

The white gunboat, too hurried even to fire, was storming in the wake of the flat-iron, steering as she steered. This was unfortunate, because the lighter craft was dead over the missing buoy.

'What you do here ?' shouted a voice from the bows.

'I'm going on. Sit tight. Now you're arranged for.'

There was a crash and a clatter as the white gunboat's nose took the shoal, and the brown mud boiled up in oozy circles under her forefoot. Then the current caught her stern on the starboard side and drove her broadside on to the shoal, slowly and gracefully. There she heeled at an undignified angle, and her crew yelled aloud.

'Neat ! Oh, damn neat !' quoth Mr. Davies, dancing on the engine-room plates, while the Kroo stokers beamed.

The flat-iron turned up-stream again, and passed under the hove-up starboard side of the white gunboat, to be received with howls and imprecations in a strange tongue. The stranded boat, exposed even to her lower strakes, was as defenceless as a turtle on its back, without the advantage of the turtle's plating. And the one big bluff gun in the bows of the flat-iron was unpleasantly near.

But the captain was valiant and swore mightily.

Bai-Jove-Judson took no sort of notice. His business was to go up the river.

'We will come in a flotilla of boats and ecraser your vile tricks,' said the captain, with language that need not be published.

Then said Bai-Jove-Judson, who was a linguist : 'You stayo where you areo, or I'll leave a holo in your bottomo that will make you muchos perforatados.'

There was a great deal of mixed language in reply, but Bai-Jove-Judson was out of hearing in a few minutes, and Mr. Davies, himself a man of few words, confided to one of his subordinates that Lieutenant Judson was 'a most remarkable prompt officer in a way of putting it.'

For two hours the flat-iron pawed madly through the muddy water, and that which had been at first a mutter became a distinct rumble.

'Was war declared?' said Mr. Davies, and Bai-Jove-Judson laughed. 'Then, damn his eyes, he might have spoilt my pretty little engines. There's war up there, though.'

The next bend brought them full in sight of a small but lively village, built round a whitewashed mud house of some pretensions. There were scores and scores of saddle-coloured soldiery in dirty white uniforms running to and fro and shouting round a man in a litter, and on a gentle slope that ran inland for four or five miles something like a brisk battle was raging round a rude stockade. A smell of unburied carcasses floated through the air and vexed the sensitive nose of Mr. Davies, who spat over the side.

'I want to get this gun on that house,' said Bai-



Jove-Judson, indicating the superior dwelling over whose flat roof floated the blue and white flag. The little twin-screws kicked up the water exactly as a hen's legs kick in the dust before she settles down to a bath. The little boat moved uneasily from left to right, backed, yawed again, went ahead, and at last the grey, blunt gun's nose was held as straight as a rifle-barrel on the mark indicated. Then Mr. Davies allowed the whistle to speak as it is not allowed to speak in Her Majesty's service on account of waste of steam. The soldiery of the village gathered into knots and groups and bunches, and the firing up the hill ceased, and every one except the crew of the flat-iron yelled aloud. Something like an English cheer came down wind.

'Our chaps in mischief for sure, probably,' said Mr. Davies. 'They must have declared war weeks ago, in a kind of way, seems to me.'

'Hold her steady, you son of a soldier !' shouted Bai-Jove-Judson, as the muzzle fell off the white house.

Something rang as loudly as a ship's bell on the forward plates of the flat-iron, something spluttered in the water, and another thing cut a groove in the deck planking an inch in front of Bai-Jove-Judson's left foot. The saddle-coloured soldiery were firing as the mood took them, and the man in the litter waved a shining sword. The muzzle of the big gun kicked down a fraction as it was laid on the mud wall at the bottom of the house garden. Ten pounds of gunpowder shut up in a hundred pounds of metal was its charge. Three or four yards of the mud wall jumped up a little, as a man jumps when he is caught in the small of the back with a knee-cap, and then

fell forward, spreading fan-wise in the fall. The soldiery fired no more that day, and Judson saw an old black woman climb to the flat roof of the house. She fumbled for a time with the flag halliards, then, finding that they were jammed, took off her one garment, which happened to be an Isabella-coloured petticoat, and waved it impatiently. The man in the litter flourished a white handkerchief, and Bai-Jove-Judson grinned. 'Now we'll give 'em one up the hill. Round with her, Mr. Davies. Curse the man who invented these floating gun-platforms ! When can I pitch in a notice without slaying one of those little devils ?'

The side of the slope was speckled with men returning in a disorderly fashion to the river-front. Behind them marched a small but very compact body of men who had filed out of the stockade. These last dragged quick-firing guns with them.

'Bai Jove, it's a regular army. I wonder whose,' said Bai-Jove-Judson, and he waited developments. The descending troops met and mixed with the troops in the village, and, with the litter in the centre, crowded down to the river, till the men with the quick-firing guns came up behind them. Then they divided left and right and the detachment marched through.

'Heave these damned things over !' said the leader of the party, and one after another ten little gatlings splashed into the muddy water. The flat-iron lay close to the bank.

'When you're *quite* done,' said Bai-Jove-Judson politely, 'would you mind telling me what's the matter ? I'm in charge here.'

'We're the Pioneers of the General Development

Company,' said the leader. 'These little bounders have been hammering us in lager for twelve hours, and we're getting rid of their Gatlings. Had to climb out and take them ; but they've snaffled the lock-actions. 'Glad to see you.'

'Any one hurt ?'

'No one killed exactly ; but we're very dry.'

'Can you hold your men ?'

The man turned round and looked at his command with a grin. There were seventy of them, all dusty and unkempt.

'We shan't sack this ash-bin, if that's what you mean. We're mostly gentlemen here, though we don't look it.'

'All right. Send the head of this post, or fort, or village, or whatever it is, aboard, and make what arrangements you can for your men.'

'We'll find some barrack accommodation somewhere. Hullo ! You in the litter there, go aboard the gunboat.' The command wheeled round, pushed through the dislocated soldiery, and began to search through the village for spare huts.

The little man in the litter came aboard smiling nervously. He was in the fullest of full uniform, with many yards of gold lace and dangling chains. Also he wore very large spurs ; the nearest horse being not more than four hundred miles away. 'My children,' said he, facing the silent soldiery, 'lay aside your arms.'

Most of the men had dropped them already and were sitting down to smoke. 'Let nothing,' he added in his own tongue, 'tempt you to kill these who have sought your protection.'

‘Now,’ said Bai-Jove-Judson, on whom the last remark was lost, ‘will you have the goodness to explain what the deuce you mean by all this nonsense?’

‘It was of a necessitate,’ said the little man. ‘The operations of war are unconformible. I am the Governor and I operate Captain. Be’old my little sword!’

‘Confound your little sword, sir. I don’t want it. You’ve fired on our flag. You’ve been firing at our people here for a week, and I’ve been fired at coming up the river.’

‘Ah! The *Guadala*. She have misconstrued you for a slaver possibly. How are the *Guadala*?’

‘Mistook a ship of Her Majesty’s Navy for a slaver! You mistake *any* craft for a slaver. Bai Jove, sir, I’ve a good mind to hang you at the yard-arm!’

There was nothing nearer that terrible spar than the walking-stick in the rack of Judson’s cabin. The Governor looked at the one mast and smiled a deprecating smile.

‘The position is embarrassment,’ he said. ‘Captain, do you think those illustrious traders burn my capital? My people will give them beer.’

‘Never mind the traders. I want an explanation.’

‘Hum! There are popular uprising in Europe, Captain—in my country.’ His eye wandered aimlessly round the horizon.

‘What has that to do with——’

‘Captain, you are very young. There is still uproariment. But I,—here he slapped his chest till his epaulets jingled—‘I am loyalist to pits of *all* my stomachs.’

‘Go on,’ said Judson, and his mouth quivered.

‘An order arrive to me to establish a custom-houses here, and to collect of the taximent from the traders when she are come here necessarily. That was on account of political understandings with your country and mine. But to that arrangement there was no money also. Not one damn’ little cowrie ! I desire damnably to extend all commercial things, and why ? I am loyalist and there is rebellion—yes, I tell you—Republics in my country for to just begin. You do not believe ? See some time how it exist. I cannot make this custom-houses and pay so the high-paid officials. The people too in my country they say the King she has no regardance into Honour of her nation. He throw away everything—Gladstone her all, you say, hey ? ’

‘Yes, that’s what we say,’ said Judson with a grin.

‘Therefore they say, let us be Republics on hot cakes. But I—I am loyalist to all my hands’ ends. Captain, once I was attaché at Mexico. I say the Republics are no good. The peoples have her stomach high. They desire—they desire—Oh, course for the bills.’

‘What on earth is that ? ’

‘The cock-fight for pay at the gate. You give something, pay for see bloody-row. Do I make my comprehension ? ’

‘A run for their money—is that what you mean ? Gad, you’re a sporting Governor ! ’

‘So I say. I am loyalist too.’ He smiled more easily. ‘Now how can anything do herself for the custom-houses ; but when the Company’s mens she arrives, *then* a cock-fight for pay-at-gate that is quite

correct. My army he says it will Republic and shoot me off upon walls if I have not give her blood. An army, Captain, are terrible in her angries—especialment when she are not paid. I know too,' here he laid his hand on Judson's shoulder, 'I know too we are old friends. Yes ! Badajos, Almeida, Fuentes d'Onor—time ever since ; and a little, little cock-fight for pay-at-gate that is good for my King. More sit her tight on throne behind, you see ? Now,' he waved his free hand round the decayed village, 'I say to my armies, "Fight ! Fight the Company's men when she come, but fight not so very strong that you are any dead." It is all in the raporta that I send. But you understand, Captain, we are good friends all the time. Ah ! Ciudad Rodrigo, you remember ? No ? Perhaps your father then ? So you see no one are dead, and we fight a fight, and it is all in the raporta, to please the people in our country ; and my armies they do not put me against the walls, you see ?'

'Yes ; but the *Guadala*. She fired on us. Was that part of your game, my joker ?'

'The *Guadala*. Ah ! No, I think not. Her captain he is too big fool. But I thought she have gone down the coast. Those your gunboats poke her nose and shove her oar in every place. How is *Guadala* ?'

'On a shoal. Stuck till I take her off.'

'There are any deads ?'

'No.'

The Governor drew a breath of deep relief. 'There are no deads here. So you see none are deads anywhere, and nothing is done. Captain, you talk to the Company's mens. I think they are not pleased.'

‘Naturally.’

‘They have no senses. I thought to go backwards again they would. I leave her stockade alone all night to let them out, but they stay and come facewards to me, not backwards. They did not know we must conquer much in all these battles, or the King, he is kicked off her throne. Now we have won this battle—this great battle,’ he waved his arms abroad, ‘and I think you will say so that we have won, Captain. You are loyalist also? You would not disturb to the peaceful Europe? Captain, I tell you this. Your Queen she know too. She would not fight her cousin. It is a—a hand-up-thing.’

‘What?’

‘Hand-up-thing. Jobe you put. How you say?’

‘Put-up job?’

‘Yes. Put-up jobe. Who is hurt? We win. You lose. All righta!’

Bai-Jove-Judson had been exploding at intervals for the last five minutes. Here he broke down completely and roared aloud.

‘But look here, Governor,’ he said at last, ‘I’ve got to think of other things than your riots in Europe. You’ve fired on our flag.’

‘Captain, if you are me, you would have done how? And also, and also,’ he drew himself up to his full height, ‘we are both brave men of bravest countries. Our honour is the honour of our King,’ here he uncovered, ‘and of our Queen,’ here he bowed low. ‘Now, Captain, you shall shell my palace and I will be your prisoner.’

‘Skittles!’ said Bai-Jove-Judson. ‘I can’t shell that old hencoop.’

‘Then come to dinner. Madeira, she are still to us, and I have of the best she manufac.’

He skipped over the side beaming, and Bai-Jove-Judson went into the cabin to laugh his laugh out. When he had recovered a little he sent Mr. Davies to the head of the Pioneers, the dusty man with the Gatlings, and the troops who had abandoned the pursuit of arms watched the disgraceful spectacle of two men reeling with laughter on the quarter-deck of a gunboat.

‘I’ll put my men to build him a custom-house,’ said the head of the Pioneers, gasping. ‘We’ll make him one decent road at least. That Governor ought to be knighted. I’m glad now that we didn’t fight ’em in the open, or we’d have killed some of them. So he’s won great battles, has he? Give him the compliments of the victims, and tell him I’m coming to dinner. You haven’t such a thing as a dress-suit, have you? I haven’t seen one for six months.’

That evening there was a dinner in the village—a general and enthusiastic dinner, whose head was in the Governor’s house, and whose tail threshed at large throughout all the streets. The Madeira was everything that the Governor had said, and more, and it was tested against two or three bottles of Bai-Jove-Judson’s best Vanderhum, which is Cape brandy ten years in the bottle, flavoured with orange-peel and spices. Before the coffee was removed (by the lady who had made the flag of truce) the Governor had given the whole of his governorship and its appurtenances, once to Bai-Jove-Judson for services rendered by Judson’s grandfather in the Peninsular War, and once to the head of the Pioneers, in con-



sideration of that gentleman's good friendship. After the negotiation he retreated for a while into an inner apartment, and there evolved a true and complete account of the defeat of the English arms, which he read with his cocked hat over one eye to Judson and his companion. It was Judson who suggested the sinking of the flat-iron with all hands, and the head of the Pioneers who supplied the list of killed and wounded (not more than two hundred) in his command.

'Gentlemen,' said the Governor from under his cocked hat, 'the peace of Europe are saved by this raporta. You shall all be Knights of the Golden Hide. She shall go by the *Guadala*.'

'Great Heavens !' said Bai-Jove-Judson, flushed but composed. 'That reminds me that I've left that boat stuck on her broadside down the river. I must go down and soothe the commandante. He'll be blue with rage. Governor, let us go a sail on the river to cool our heads. A picnic, you understand.'

'Ya—as ! Everything I understand. Ho ! A picnica ! You are all my prisoner, but I am good gaoler. We shall picnic on the river, and we shall take *all* the girls. Come on, my prisoners.'

'I do hope,' said the head of the Pioneers, staring from the verandah into the roaring village, 'that my chaps won't set the town alight by accident. Hullo ! Hullo ! A guard of honour for His Excellency, the most illustrious Governor !'

Some thirty men answered the call, made a swaying line upon a more swaying course, and bore the Governor most swayingly of all high in their arms as

they staggered down to the river. And the song that they sang bade them, 'Swing, swing together, their body between their knees'; and they obeyed the words of the song faithfully, except that they were anything but 'steady from stroke to bow.' His Excellency the Governor slept on his uneasy litter, and did not wake when the chorus dropped him on the deck of the flat-iron.

'Good-night and good-bye,' said the head of the Pioneers to Judson. 'I'd give you my card if I had it, but I'm so damned drunk I hardly know my own Club. Oh yes! It's the Travellers. If ever we meet in Town, remember me. I must stay here and look after my fellows. We're all right in the open, now. I s'pose you'll return the Governor some time. This is a political crisis. Good-night.'

The flat-iron went down-stream through the dark. The Governor slept on deck, and Judson took the wheel, but how he steered, and why he did not run into each bank many times, that officer does not remember. Mr. Davies did not note anything unusual, for there are two ways of taking too much, and Judson was only ward-room, not foc's'le drunk. As the night grew colder the Governor woke up, and expressed a desire for whisky and soda. When that came they were nearly abreast of the stranded *Guadala*, and His Excellency saluted the flag that he could not see with loyal and patriotic strains.

'They do not see. They do not hear,' he cried. 'Ten thousand saints! They sleep, and I have won battles! Ha!'

He started forward to the gun, which, very naturally, was loaded, pulled the lanyard, and woke the

dead night with the roar of the full charge behind a common shell. That shell, mercifully, just missed the stern of the *Guadala*, and burst on the bank. 'Now you shall salute your Governor,' said he, as he heard feet running in all directions within the iron skin. 'Why you demand so base a quarter? I am here with all my prisoners.'

In the hurly-burly and the general shriek for mercy his reassurances were not heard.

'Captain,' said a grave voice from the ship, 'we have surrendered. Is it the custom of the English to fire on a helpless ship?'

'Surrendered! Holy Virgin! I go to cut off all their heads. You shall be ate by wild ants—flog and drowned! Throw me a balcony. It is I, the Governor! You shall never surrender. Judson of my soul, ascend her inside, and send me a bed, for I am sleepy. But, oh, I will multiple-time kill that captain!'

'Oh!' said the voice in the darkness, 'I begin to comprehend.' And a rope-ladder was thrown, up which the Governor scrambled, with Judson at his heels.

'Now we will enjoy executions,' said the Governor on the deck. 'All these Republicans shall be shot. Little Judson, if I am *not* drunk, why are so sloping the boards which do not support?'

The deck, as I have said, was at a very stiff cant. His Excellency sat down, slid to leeward, and fell asleep again.

The captain of the *Guadala* bit his moustache furiously, and muttered in his own tongue: '“This land is the father of great villains and the step-father

of honest men." You see our material, Captain. It is so everywhere with us. You have killed some of the rats, I hope ?'

'Not a rat,' said Judson genially.

'That is a pity. If they were dead, our country might send us men, but our country is dead too, and I am dishonoured on a mud-bank through your English treachery.'

'Well, it seems to me that firing on a little tub of our size without a word of warning when you knew that the countries were at peace is treachery enough in a small way.'

'If one of my guns had touched you, you would have gone to the bottom, all of you. I would have taken the risk with my Government. By that time it would have been——'

'A Republic. So you really *did* mean fighting on your own hook ! You're rather a dangerous officer to cut loose in a navy like yours. Well, what are you going to do now ?'

'Stay here. Go away in boats. What does it matter ? That drunken cat'—he pointed to the shadow in which the Governor slept—'is here. I must take him back to his hole.'

'Very good. I'll tow you off at daylight if you get steam up.'

'Captain, I warn you that as soon as she floats again I will fight you.'

'Humbug ! You'll have lunch with me, and then you'll take the Governor up the river.'

The captain was silent for some time. Then he said : 'Let us drink. What must be, must be, and after all we have not forgotten the Peninsular. You

will admit, Captain, that it is bad to be run upon a shoal like a mud-dredger ?'

'Oh, we'll pull you off before you can say knife. Take care of His Excellency. I shall try to get a little sleep now.'

They slept on both ships till the morning, and then the work of towing off the *Guadala* began. With the help of her own engines, and the tugging and puffing of the flat-iron, she slid off the mud-bank sideways into deep water, the flat-iron immediately under her stern, and the big eye of the four-inch gun almost peering through the window of the captain's cabin.

Remorse in the shape of a violent headache had overtaken the Governor. He was uneasily conscious that he might perhaps have exceeded his powers, and the captain of the *Guadala*, in spite of all his patriotic sentiments, remembered distinctly that no war had been declared between the two countries. He did not need the Governor's repeated reminders that war, serious war, meant a Republic at home, possible supersession in his command, and much shooting of living men against dead walls.

'We have satisfied our honour,' said the Governor in confidence. 'Our army is appeased, and the raporta that you take home will show that we were loyal and brave. That other captain ? Bah ! He is a boy. He will call this a—a—Judson of my soul, how you say this is—all this affairs which have transpired between us ?'

Judson was watching the last hawser slipping through the fairlead. 'Call it ? Oh, I should call it rather a lark. Now your boat's all right, Captain. When will you come to lunch ?'

'I told you,' said the Governor, 'it would be a larque to him.'

'Mother of the Saints ! then what is his seriousness ?' said the captain. 'We shall be happy to come when you will. Indeed, we have no other choice,' he added bitterly.

'Not at all,' said Judson, and as he looked at the three or four shot-blisters on the bows of his boat a brilliant idea took him. 'It is we who are at your mercy. See how His Excellency's guns knocked us about.'

'Senhor Capitan,' said the Governor pityingly, 'that is very sad. You are most injured, and your deck, too, it is all shot over. We shall not be too severe on a beat man, shall we, Captain ?'

'You couldn't spare us a little paint, could you ? I'd like to patch up a little after the—action,' said Judson meditatively, fingering his upper lip to hide a smile.

'Our storeroom is at your disposition,' said the captain of the *Guadala*, and his eye brightened ; for a few lead splashes on grey paint make a big show.

'Mr. Davies, go aboard and see what they have to spare—to spare, remember. Their spar-colour with a little working up should be just our free-board tint.'

'Oh yes. I'll spare them,' said Mr. Davies, savagely. 'I don't understand this how-d'you-do and damn-your-eyes business coming one atop of the other, in a manner o' speaking ! By all rights, they're our lawful prize, after a manner o' sayin'.'

The Governor and the captain came to lunch in the

absence of Mr. Davies. Bai-Jove-Judson had not much to offer them, but what he had was given as by a beaten foeman to a generous conqueror. When they were a little warmed—the Governor genial and the captain almost effusive—he explained quite casually over the opening of a bottle that it would not be to his interest to report the affair seriously, and it was in the highest degree improbable that the Admiral would treat it in any grave fashion.

‘When my decks are cut up’ (there was one groove across four planks), ‘and my plates buckled’ (there were five lead patches on three plates), ‘and I meet such a boat as the *Guadala*, and a mere accident saves me from being blown out of the water——’

‘Yes. A mere accident, Captain. The shoal-buoy has been lost,’ said the captain of the *Guadala*.

‘Ah? I do not know this river. That was very sad. But as I was saying, when an accident saves me from being sunk, what can I do but go away—if that is possible? But I fear that I have no coal for the sea-voyage. It is very sad.’ Judson had compromised on what he knew of the French tongue as a medium of communication.

‘It is enough,’ said the Governor, waving a generous hand. ‘Judson of my soul, the coal is yours and you shall be repaired—yes, repaired all over, of your battle’s wounds. You shall go with all the honours of all the wars. Your flag shall fly. Your drum shall beat. Your, ah!—jolly-boys shall spoke their bayonets! Is it not so, Captain?’

‘As you say, Excellency. But those traders in the town. What of them?’

The Governor looked puzzled for an instant. He

could not quite remember what had happened to those jovial men who had cheered him overnight. Judson interrupted swiftly : ‘ His Excellency has set them to forced works on barracks and magazines, and, I think, a custom-house. When that is done they will be released, I hope, Excellency.’

‘ Yes, they shall be released for your sake, little Judson of my heart.’ Then they drank the health of their respective sovereigns, while Mr. Davies superintended the removal of the scarred plank and the shot-marks on the deck and the bow-plates.

‘ Oh, this is too bad,’ said Judson when they went on deck. ‘ That idiot has exceeded his instructions, but—but you must let me pay for this !’

Mr. Davies, his legs in the water as he sat on a staging slung over the bows, was acutely conscious that he was being blamed in a foreign tongue. He twisted uneasily, and went on with his work.

‘ What is it ?’ said the Governor.

‘ That thick-head has thought that we needed some gold-leaf, and he has borrowed that from your storeroom, but I must make it good.’ Then in English, ‘ Stand up, Mr. Davies ! What the Furnace in Tophet do you mean by taking their gold-leaf ? My——, are we a set of hairy pirates to scoff the storeroom out of a painted Levantine bumboat ? Look contrite, you butt-ended, broad-breeched, bottle-bellied, swivel-eyed son of a tinker, you ! My soul alive, can’t I maintain discipline in my own ship without a hired blacksmith of a boiler-riveter putting me to shame before a yellow-nosed picaroon ! Get off the staging, Mr. Davies, and go to the engine-room ! Put down that leaf first, though, and leave



the books where they are. I'll send for you in a minute. Go aft !'

Now, only the upper half of Mr. Davies's round face was above the bulwarks when this torrent of abuse descended upon him ; and it rose inch by inch as the shower continued, blank amazement, bewilderment, rage, and injured pride chasing each other across it till he saw his superior officer's left eyelid flutter on the cheek twice. Then he fled to the engine-room, and wiping his brow with a handful of cotton-waste, sat down to overtake circumstances.

'I am desolated,' said Judson to his companions, 'but you see the material that they give us. This leaves me more in your debt than before. The stuff I can replace' [gold-leaf is never carried on floating gun-platforms], 'but for the insolence of that man how shall I apologise ?'

Mr. Davies's mind moved slowly, but after a while he transferred the cotton-waste from his forehead to his mouth and bit on it to prevent laughter. He began a second dance on the engine-room plates. 'Neat ! Oh, damned neat !' he chuckled. 'I've served with a good few, but never one so neat as him. And I thought he was the new kind that don't know how to throw a few words, as it were.'

'Mr. Davies, you can continue your work,' said Judson down the engine-room hatch. 'These officers have been good enough to speak in your favour. Make a thorough job of it while you are about it. Slap on every man you have. Where did you get hold of it ?'

'Their storeroom is a regular theatre, sir. You

couldn't miss it. There's enough for two first-rates, and I've scoffed the best half of it.'

'Look sharp then. We shall be coaling from her this afternoon. You'll have to cover it all up.'

'Neat! Oh, damned neat!' said Mr. Davies under his breath, as he gathered his subordinates together, and set about accomplishing the long-deferred wish of Judson's heart.

. . . . .

It was the *Martin Frobisher*, the flagship, a great war-boat when she was new, in the days when men built for sail as well as for steam. She could turn twelve knots under full sail, and it was under that that she stood up the mouth of the river, a pyramid of silver beneath the moon. The Admiral, fearing that he had given Judson a task beyond his strength, was coming to look for him, and incidentally to do a little diplomatic work along the coast. There was hardly wind enough to move the *Frobisher* a couple of knots an hour, and the silence of the land closed about her as she entered the fairway. Her yards sighed a little from time to time, and the ripple under her bows answered the sigh. The full moon rose over the steaming swamps, and the Admiral gazing upon it thought less of Judson and more of the softer emotions. In answer to the very mood of his mind there floated across the silver levels of the water, mellowed by distance to a most poignant sweetness, the throb of a mandolin, and the voice of one who called upon a genteel Julia—upon Julia, and upon Love. The song ceased, and the sighing of the yards was all that broke the silence of the big ship.

Again the mandolin began, and the commander on the lee side of the quarter-deck grinned a grin that was reflected in the face of the signal-midshipman. Not a word of the song was lost, and the voice of the singer was the voice of Judson.

‘ Last week down our alley came a toff,  
Nice old geyser with a nasty cough,  
Sees my missus, takes his topper off,  
Quite in a gentlemanly way ’—

and so on to the end of the verse. The chorus was borne by several voices, and the signal-midshipman’s foot began to tap the deck furtively.

“ What cheer ! ” all the neighbours cried.  
“ Oo are you goin’ to meet, Bill ?  
’Ave you bought the street, Bill ? ”  
Laugh ?—I thought I should ha’ died  
When I knocked ’em in the Old Kent Road.’

It was the Admiral’s gig, rowing softly, that came into the midst of that merry little smoking-concert. It was Judson, with the beribboned mandolin round his neck, who received the Admiral as he came up the side of the *Guadala*, and it may or may not have been the Admiral who stayed till three in the morning and delighted the hearts of the captain and the Governor. He had come as an unbidden guest, and he departed as an honoured one, but strictly unofficial throughout. Judson told his tale next day in the Admiral’s cabin as well as he could in the face of the Admiral’s gales of laughter ; but the most amazing tale was that told by Mr. Davies to his friends in the

dockyard at Simon's Town from the point of view of a second-class engine-room artificer, all unversed in diplomacy.

And if there be no truth either in my tale, which is Judson's tale, or the tales of Mr. Davies, you will *not* find in harbour at Simon's Town to-day a flat-bottomed, twin-screw gunboat, designed solely for the defence of rivers, about two hundred and seventy tons displacement and five feet draught, wearing in open defiance of the rules of the Service a gold line on her grey paint. It follows also that you will be compelled to credit that version of the fray which, signed by His Excellency the Governor and despatched in the *Guadala*, satisfied the self-love of a great and glorious people, and saved a monarchy from the ill-considered despotism which is called a Republic.

## NAMGAY DOOLA

There came to the beach a poor exile of Erin,  
The dew on his wet robe hung heavy and chill ;  
Ere the steamer that brought him had passed out of hearin',  
He was Alderman Mike inthrojuicin' a bill !

*American Song.*

ONCE upon a time there was a King who lived on the road to Thibet, very many miles in the Himalayas. His Kingdom was eleven thousand feet above the sea and exactly four miles square : but most of the miles stood on end owing to the nature of the country. His revenues were rather less than four hundred pounds yearly, and they were expended in the maintenance of one elephant and a Standing Army of five men. He was tributary to the Indian Government, who allowed him certain sums for keeping a section of the Himalaya-Thibet road in repair. He further increased his revenues by selling timber to the Railway companies ; for he would cut the great deodar trees in his one forest, and they fell thundering into the Sutlej river and were swept down to the plains three hundred miles away and became railway-ties. Now and again this King, whose name does not matter, would mount a ringstraked horse and ride scores of miles to Simla-town to confer with the Lieutenant-Governor on matters of state, or to assure the Viceroy that his sword was at the service of the Queen-Empress. Then the Viceroy would

cause a ruffle of drums to be sounded, and the ring-straked horse and the cavalry of the State—two men in tatters—and the herald who bore the silver stick before the King, would trot back to their own place, which lay between the tail of a heaven-climbing glacier and a dark birch-forest.

Now, from such a King, always remembering that he possessed one veritable elephant, and could count his descent for twelve hundred years, I expected, when it was my fate to wander through his dominions, no more than mere licence to live.

The night had closed in rain, and rolling clouds blotted out the lights of the villages in the valley. Forty miles away, untouched by cloud or storm, the white shoulder of Donga Pa—the Mountain of the Council of the Gods—upheld the Evening Star. The monkeys sang sorrowfully to each other as they hunted for dry roosts in the fern-wreathed trees, and the last puff of the day-wind brought from the unseen villages the scent of damp wood-smoke, hot cakes, dripping undergrowth, and rotting pine-cones. That is the true smell of the Himalayas, and if once it creeps into the blood of a man, that man will at the last, forgetting all else, return to the hills to die. The clouds closed and the smell went away, and there remained nothing in all the world except chilling white mist and the boom of the Sutlej river racing through the valley below. A fat-tailed sheep, who did not want to die, bleated piteously at my tent door. He was scuffling with the Prime Minister and the Director-General of Public Education, and he was a royal gift to me and my camp servants. I expressed my thanks suitably,

and asked if I might have audience of the King. The Prime Minister readjusted his turban, which had fallen off in the struggle, and assured me that the King would be very pleased to see me. Therefore I despatched two bottles as a foretaste, and when the sheep had entered upon another incarnation went to the King's Palace through the wet. He had sent his army to escort me, but the army stayed to talk with my cook. Soldiers are very much alike all the world over.

The Palace was a four-roomed, and white-washed mud and timber house, the finest in all the hills for a day's journey. The King was dressed in a purple velvet jacket, white muslin trousers, and a saffron-yellow turban of price. He gave me audience in a little carpeted room opening off the palace courtyard which was occupied by the Elephant of State. The great beast was sheeted and anchored from trunk to tail, and the curve of his back stood out grandly against the mist.

The Prime Minister and the Director-General of Public Education were present to introduce me, but all the court had been dismissed, lest the two bottles aforesaid should corrupt their morals. The King cast a wreath of heavy-scented flowers round my neck as I bowed, and inquired how my honoured presence had the felicity to be. I said that through seeing his auspicious countenance the mists of the night had turned into sunshine, and that by reason of his beneficent sheep his good deeds would be remembered by the Gods. He said that since I had set my magnificent foot in his Kingdom the crops would probably yield seventy per cent more

than the average. I said that the fame of the King had reached to the four corners of the earth, and that the nations gnashed their teeth when they heard daily of the glories of his realm and the wisdom of his moon-like Prime Minister and lotus-like Director-General of Public Education.

Then we sat down on clean white cushions, and I was at the King's right hand. Three minutes later he was telling me that the state of the maize crop was something disgraceful, and that the Railway companies would not pay him enough for his timber. The talk shifted to and fro with the bottles, and we discussed very many stately things, and the King became confidential on the subject of Government generally. Most of all he dwelt on the shortcomings of one of his subjects, who, from all I could gather, had been paralyzing the executive.

'In the old days,' said the King, 'I could have ordered the Elephant yonder to trample him to death. Now I must e'en send him seventy miles across the hills to be tried, and his keep would be upon the State. The Elephant eats everything.'

'What be the man's crimes, Rajah Sahib?' said I.

'Firstly, he is an outlander and no man of mine own people. Secondly, since of my favour I gave him land upon his first coming, he refuses to pay revenue. Am I not the lord of the earth, above and below, entitled by right and custom to one-eighth of the crop? Yet this devil, establishing himself, refuses to pay a single tax; and he brings a poisonous spawn of babes.'

'Cast him into jail,' I said.

'Sahib,' the King answered, shifting a little on



the cushions, 'once and only once in these forty years sickness came upon me so that I was not able to go abroad. In that hour I made a vow to my God that I would never again cut man or woman from the light of the sun and the air of God ; for I perceived the nature of the punishment. How can I break my vow ? Were it only the lopping of a hand or a foot I should not delay. But even that is impossible now that the English have rule. One or another of my people'—he looked obliquely at the Director-General of Public Education—'would at once write a letter to the Viceroy, and perhaps I should be deprived of my ruffle of drums.'

He unscrewed the mouthpiece of his silver water-pipe, fitted a plain amber mouthpiece, and passed his pipe to me. 'Not content with refusing revenue,' he continued, 'this outlander refuses also the *begar*' (this was the *corvée* or forced labour on the roads) 'and stirs my people up to the like treason. Yet he is, when he wills, an expert log-snatcher. There is none better or bolder among my people to clear a block of the river when the logs stick fast.'

'But he worships strange Gods,' said the Prime Minister deferentially.

'For that I have no concern,' said the King, who was as tolerant as Akbar in matters of belief. 'To each man his own God and the fire or Mother Earth for us all at last. It is the rebellion that offends me.'

'The King has an Army,' I suggested. 'Has not the King burned the man's house and left him naked to the night dews ?'

'Nay, a hut is a hut, and it holds the life of a man. But once, I sent my Army against him when his

excuses became wearisome : of their heads he brake three across the top with a stick. The other two men ran away. Also the guns would not shoot.'

I had seen the equipment of the infantry. One-third of it was an old muzzle-loading fowling-piece, with a ragged rust-hole where the nipples should have been, one-third a wire-bound matchlock with a worm-eaten stock, and one-third a four-bore flint duck-gun without a flint.

'But it is to be remembered,' said the King, reaching out for the bottle, 'that he is a very expert log-snatcher and a man of a merry face. What shall I do to him, Sahib ?'

This was interesting. The timid hill-folk would as soon have refused taxes to their King as revenues to their Gods.

'If it be the King's permission,' I said, 'I will not strike my tents till the third day and I will see this man. The mercy of the King is God-like, and rebellion is like unto the sin of witchcraft. Moreover, both the bottles and another be empty.'

'You have my leave to go,' said the King.

Next morning a crier went through the State proclaiming that there was a log-jam on the river, and that it behoved all loyal subjects to remove it. The people poured down from their villages to the moist, warm valley of poppy-fields ; and the King and I went with them. Hundreds of dressed deodar logs had caught on a snag of rock, and the river was bringing down more logs every minute to complete the blockade. The water snarled and wrenched and worried at the timber, and the population of the State began prodding the nearest logs with a

pole in the hope of starting a general movement. Then there went up a shout of 'Namgay Doola ! Namgay Doola !' and a large red-haired villager hurried up, stripping off his clothes as he ran.

'That is he. That is the rebel,' said the King. 'Now will the dam be cleared.'

'But why has he red hair ?' I asked, since red hair among hill-folks is as common as blue or green.

'He is an outlander,' said the King. 'Well done ! Oh, well done !'

Namgay Doola had scrambled out on the jam and was clawing out the butt of a log with a rude sort of boat-hook. It slid forward slowly as an alligator moves, three or four others followed it, and the green water spouted through the gaps they had made. Then the villagers howled and shouted and scrambled across the logs, pulling and pushing the obstinate timber, and the red head of Namgay Doola was chief among them all. The logs swayed and chafed and groaned as fresh consignments from up-stream battered the now weakening dam. All gave way at last in a smother of foam, racing logs, bobbing black heads and confusion indescribable. The river tossed everything before it. I saw the red head go down with the last remnants of the jam and disappear between the great grinding tree-trunks. It rose close to the bank and blowing like a grampus. Namgay Doola wrung the water out of his eyes and made obeisance to the King. I had time to observe him closely. The virulent redness of his shock head and beard was most startling ; and in the thicket of hair wrinkled above high cheek-bones shone two very merry blue eyes. He was

indeed an outlander, but yet a Thibetan in language, habit, and attire. He spoke the Lepcha dialect with an indescribable softening of the gutturals. It was not so much a lisp as an accent.

‘Whence comest thou?’ I asked.

‘From Thibet.’ He pointed across the hills and grinned. That grin went straight to my heart. Mechanically I held out my hand and Namgay Doola shook it. No pure Thibetan would have understood the meaning of the gesture. He went away to look for his clothes, and as he climbed back to his village, I heard a joyous yell that seemed unaccountably familiar. It was the whooping of Namgay Doola.

‘You see now,’ said the King, ‘why I would not kill him. He is a bold man among my logs, but,’ and he shook his head like a schoolmaster, ‘I know that before long there will be complaints of him in the court. Let us return to the Palace and do justice.’ It was that King’s custom to judge his subjects every day between eleven and three o’clock. I saw him decide equitably in weighty matters of trespass, slander, and a little wife-stealing. Then his brow clouded and he summoned me.

‘Again it is Namgay Doola,’ he said despairingly. ‘Not content with refusing revenue on his own part, he has bound half his village by an oath to the like treason. Never before has such a thing befallen me! Nor are my taxes heavy.’

A rabbit-faced villager, with a blush-rose stuck behind his ear, advanced trembling. He had been in the conspiracy, but had told everything and hoped for the King’s favour.

‘O King,’ said I. ‘If it be the King’s will let

this matter stand over till the morning. Only the Gods can do right swiftly, and it may be that yonder villager has lied.'

'Nay, for I know the nature of Namgay Doola ; but since a guest asks let the matter remain. Wilt thou speak harshly to this red-headed outlander ? He may listen to thee.'

I made an attempt that very evening, but for the life of me I could not keep my countenance. Namgay Doola grinned persuasively, and began to tell me about a big brown bear in a poppy-field by the river. Would I care to shoot it ? I spoke austere on the sin of conspiracy, and the certainty of punishment. Namgay Doola's face clouded for a moment. Shortly afterwards he withdrew from my tent, and I heard him singing to himself softly among the pines. The words were unintelligible to me, but the tune, like his liquid insinuating speech, seemed the ghost of something strangely familiar.

' Dir hané mard-i-yemen dir  
To weeree ala gee, '

sang Namgay Doola again and again, and I racked my brain for that lost tune. It was not till after dinner that I discovered some one had cut a square foot of velvet from the centre of my best camera-cloth. This made me so angry that I wandered down the valley in the hope of meeting the big brown bear. I could hear him grunting like a discontented pig in the poppy-field, and I waited shoulder-deep in the dew-dripping Indian corn to catch him after his meal. The moon was at full and drew out the rich scent of the tasselled crop. Then I heard the

anguished bellow of a Himalayan cow, one of the little black crummies no bigger than Newfoundland dogs. Two shadows that looked like a bear and her cub hurried past me. I was in act to fire when I saw that they had each a brilliant red head. The lesser animal was trailing some rope behind it that left a dark track on the path. They passed within six feet of me, and the shadow of the moonlight lay velvet-black on their faces. Velvet-black was exactly the word, for by all the powers of moonlight they were masked in the velvet of my camera-cloth ! I marvelled and went to bed.

Next morning the Kingdom was in uproar. Namgay Doola, men said, had gone forth in the night and with a sharp knife had cut off the tail of a cow belonging to the rabbit-faced villager who had betrayed him. It was sacrilege unspeakable against the Holy Cow. The State desired his blood, but he had retreated into his hut, barricaded the doors and windows with big stones, and defied the world.

The King and I and the Populace approached the hut cautiously. There was no hope of capturing the man without loss of life, for from a hole in the wall projected the muzzle of an extremely well-cared-for gun—the only gun in the State that could shoot. Namgay Doola had narrowly missed a villager just before we came up. The Standing Army stood. It could do no more, for when it advanced pieces of sharp shale flew from the windows. To these were added from time to time showers of scalding water. We saw red heads bobbing up and down in the hut. The family of Namgay Doola

were aiding their sire, and blood-curdling yells of defiance were the only answers to our prayers.

‘Never,’ said the King, puffing, ‘has such a thing befallen my State. Next year I will certainly buy a little cannon.’ He looked at me imploringly.

‘Is there any priest in the Kingdom to whom he will listen?’ said I, ‘for a light was beginning to break upon me.’

‘He worships his own God,’ said the Prime Minister. ‘We can starve him out.’

‘Let the white man approach,’ said Namgay Doola from within. ‘All others I will kill. Send me the white man.’

The door was thrown open and I entered the smoky interior of a Thibetan hut crammed with children. And every child had flaming red hair. A raw cow’s-tail lay on the floor, and by its side two pieces of black velvet—my black velvet—rudely hacked into the semblance of masks.

‘And what is this shame, Namgay Doola?’ said I.

He grinned more winningly than ever. ‘There is no shame,’ said he. ‘I did but cut off the tail of that man’s cow. He betrayed me. I was minded to shoot him, Sahib. But not to death. Indeed not to death. Only in the legs.’

‘And why at all, since it is the custom to pay revenue to the King? Why at all?’

‘By the God of my father, I cannot tell,’ said Namgay Doola.

‘And who was thy father?’

‘The same that had this gun.’ He showed me his weapon—a Tower musket bearing date 1832 and the stamp of the Honourable East India Company.

‘And thy father’s name?’ said I.

‘Timlay Doola,’ said he. ‘At the first, I being then a little child, it is in my mind that he wore a red coat.’

‘Of that I have no doubt. But repeat the name of thy father thrice or four times.’

He obeyed, and I understood whence the puzzling accent in his speech came. ‘Thimla Dhula,’ said he excitedly. ‘To this hour I worship his God.’

‘May I see that God?’

‘In a little while—at twilight time.’

‘Rememberest thou aught of thy father’s speech?’

‘It is long ago. But there is one word which he said often. Thus “*Shun*.” Then I and my brethren stood upon our feet, our hands to our sides. Thus.’

‘Even so. And what was thy mother?’

‘A woman of the hills. We be Lepchas of Darjeeling, but me they call an outlander because my hair is as thou seest.’

The Thibetan woman, his wife, touched him on the arm gently. The long parley outside the fort had lasted far into the day. It was now close upon twilight—the hour of the Angelus. Very solemnly, the red-headed brats rose from the floor and formed a semicircle. Namgay Doola laid his gun against the wall, lighted a little oil lamp, and set it before a recess in the wall. Pulling aside a curtain of dirty cloth he revealed a worn brass crucifix leaning against the helmet-badge of a long forgotten East India regiment. ‘Thus did my father,’ he said, crossing himself clumsily. The wife and children followed



suit. Then all together they struck up the wailing chant that I heard on the hillside—

‘ Dir hané mard-i-yemen dir  
To weeree ala gee. ’

I was puzzled no longer. Again and again they crooned as if their hearts would break, their version of the chorus of *The Wearing of the Green*—

‘ They’re hanging men and women too,  
For the wearing of the green. ’

A diabolical inspiration came to me. One of the brats, a boy about eight years old, was watching me as he sang. I pulled out a rupee, held the coin between finger and thumb, and looked—only looked—at the gun against the wall. A grin of brilliant and perfect comprehension overspread the face of the child. Never for an instant stopping the song he held out his hand for the money, and then slid the gun to my hand. I might have shot Namgay Doola as he chanted. But I was satisfied. The blood-instinct of the race held true. Namgay Doola drew the curtain across the recess. Angelus was over.

‘ Thus my father sang. There was much more, but I have forgotten, and I do not know the purport of these words, but it may be that the God will understand. I am not of this people, and I will not pay revenue.’

‘ And why ? ’

Again that soul-compelling grin. ‘ What occupation would be to me between crop and crop ? It is better than scaring bears. But these people do

not understand.' He picked the masks from the floor, and looked in my face as simply as a child.

'By what road didst thou attain knowledge to make these devilries?' I said, pointing.

'I cannot tell. I am but a Lepcha of Darjeeling, and yet the stuff——'

'Which thou hast stolen.'

'Nay, surely. Did I steal? I desired it so. The stuff—the stuff—what else should I have done with the stuff?' He twisted the velvet between his fingers.

'But the sin of maiming the cow—consider that?'

'That is true; but oh, Sahib, that man betrayed me and I had no thought—but the heifer's tail waved in the moonlight and I had my knife. What else should I have done? The tail came off ere I was aware. Sahib, thou knowest more than I.'

'That is true,' said I. 'Stay within the door. I go to speak to the King.'

The population of the State were ranged on the hillsides. I went forth and spoke to the King.

'O King,' said I. 'Touching this man there be two courses open to thy wisdom. Thou canst either hang him from a tree, he and his brood, till there remains no hair that is red within the land.'

'Nay,' said the King. 'Why should I hurt the little children?'

They had poured out of the hut door and were making plump obeisance to everybody. Namgay Doola waited with his gun across his arm.

'Or thou canst, discarding the impiety of the cow-maiming, raise him to honour in thy Army. He comes of a race that will not pay revenue. A

red flame is in his blood which comes out at the top of his head in that glowing hair. Make him chief of the Army. Give him honour as may befall, and full allowance of work, but look to it, O King, that neither he nor his hold a foot of earth from thee henceforward. Feed him with words and favour, and also liquor from certain bottles that thou knowest of, and he will be a bulwark of defence. But deny him even a tuft of grass for his own. This is the nature that God has given him. Moreover he has brethren——’

The State groaned unanimously.

‘But if his brethren come, they will surely fight with each other till they die; or else the one will always give information concerning the other. Shall he be of thy Army, O King? Choose.’

The King bowed his head, and I said, ‘Come forth, Namgay Doola, and command the King’s Army. Thy name shall no more be Namgay in the mouths of men, but Patsay Doola, for as thou hast said, I know.’

Then Namgay Doola, new christened Patsay Doola, son of Timlay Doola, which is Tim Doolan gone very wrong indeed, clasped the King’s feet, cuffed the Standing Army, and hurried in an agony of contrition from temple to temple, making offerings for the sin of cattle maiming.

And the King was so pleased with my perspicacity that he offered to sell me a village for twenty pounds sterling. But I buy no villages in the Himalayas so long as one red head flares between the tail of the heaven-climbing glacier and the dark birch-forest.

I know that breed.

## PIG

Go, stalk the red deer o'er the heather,  
Ride, follow the fox if you can !  
But, for pleasure and profit together,  
Allow me the hunting of Man,—  
The chase of the Human, the search for the Soul  
To its ruin,—the hunting of Man.

*The Old Shikarri.*

I BELIEVE the difference began in the matter of a horse, with a twist in his temper, whom Pinecoffin sold to Nafferton, and by whom Nafferton was nearly slain. There may have been other causes of offence ; the horse was the official stalking-horse. Nafferton was very angry ; but Pinecoffin laughed, and said that he had never guaranteed the beast's manners. Nafferton laughed too, though he vowed that he would write off his fall against Pinecoffin if he waited five years. Now, a Dalesman from beyond Skipton will forgive an injury when the Strid lets a man live ; but a South Devon man is as soft as a Dartmoor bog. You can see from their names that Nafferton had the race-advantage of Pinecoffin. He was a peculiar man, and his notions of humour were cruel. He taught me a new and fascinating form of *shikar*. He hounded Pinecoffin from Mithankot to Jagadri, and from Gurgaon to Abbottabad—up and across the Punjab, a large Province, and in places remarkably dry. He said that he had no intention of allowing

Assistant Commissioners to 'sell him pups,' in the shape of ramping, screaming countrybreds, without making their lives a burden to them.

Most Assistant Commissioners develop a bent for some special work after their first hot weather in the country. The boys with digestions hope to write their names large on the Frontier, and struggle for dreary places like Bannu and Kohat. The bilious ones climb into the Secretariat ; which is very bad for the liver. Others are bitten with a mania for District work, Ghuznive coins or Persian poetry ; while some, who come of farmers' stock, find that the smell of the earth after the Rains gets into their blood, and calls them to 'develop the resources of the Province.' These men are enthusiasts. Pinecoffin belonged to their class. He knew a great many facts bearing on the cost of bullocks and temporary wells, and opium-scrapers, and what happens if you burn too much rubbish on a field in the hope of enriching used-up soil. All the Pinecoffins come of a landholding breed, and so the land only took back her own again. Unfortunately—most unfortunately for Pinecoffin—he was a Civilian as well as a farmer. Nafferton watched him, and thought about the horse. Nafferton said, 'See me chase that boy till he drops !' I said, 'You can't get your knife into an Assistant Commissioner.' Nafferton told me that I did not understand the administration of the Province.

Our Government is rather peculiar. It gushes on the agricultural and general information side, and will supply a moderately respectable man with all sorts of 'economic statistics,' if he speaks to it

prettily. For instance, you are interested in gold-washing in the sands of the Sutlej. You pull the string, and find that it wakes up half a dozen Departments, and finally communicates, say, with a friend of yours in the Telegraph, who once wrote some notes on the customs of the gold-washers when he was on construction-work in their part of the Empire. He may or may not be pleased at being ordered to write out everything he knows for your benefit. This depends on his temperament. The bigger man you are, the more information and the greater trouble can you raise.

Nafferton was not a big man ; but he had the reputation of being very 'earnest.' An 'earnest' man can do much with a Government. There was an earnest man once who nearly wrecked . . . but all India knows *that* story. I am not sure what real 'earnestness' is. A very fair imitation can be manufactured by neglecting to dress decently, by mooning about in a dreamy, misty sort of way, by taking office-work home, after staying in office till seven, and by receiving crowds of native gentlemen on Sundays. That is one sort of 'earnestness.'

Nafferton cast about for a peg whereon to hang his earnestness, and for a string that would communicate with Pinecoffin. He found both. They were Pig. Nafferton became an earnest inquirer after Pig. He informed the Government that he had a scheme whereby a very large percentage of the British Army in India could be fed, at a very large saving, on Pig. Then he hinted that Pinecoffin might supply him with the 'varied information necessary to the proper inception of the scheme.' So

the Government wrote on the back of the letter, 'Instruct Mr. Pinecoffin to furnish Mr. Nafferton with any information in his power.' Government is very prone to writing things on the backs of letters which, later, lead to trouble and confusion.

Nafferton had not the faintest interest in Pig, but he knew that Pinecoffin would flounce into the trap. Pinecoffin was delighted at being consulted about Pig. The Indian Pig is not exactly an important factor in agricultural life ; but Nafferton explained to Pinecoffin that there was room for improvement, and corresponded direct with that young man.

You may think that there is not much to be evolved from Pig. It all depends how you set to work. Pinecoffin being a Civilian and wishing to do things thoroughly, began with an essay on the Primitive Pig, the Mythology of the Pig, and the Dravidian Pig. Nafferton filed that information—twenty-seven foolscap sheets—and wanted to know about the distribution of the Pig in the Punjab, and how it stood the Plains in the hot weather. From this point onwards remember that I am giving you only the barest outlines of the affair—the guy-ropes, as it were, of the web that Nafferton spun round Pinecoffin.

Pinecoffin made a coloured Pig-population map, and collected observations on the comparative longevity of Pig (*a*) in the sub-montane tracts of the Himalayas, and (*b*) in the Rechna Doab. Nafferton filed that, and asked what sort of people looked after Pig. This started an ethnological excursus on swineherds, and drew from Pinecoffin long tables showing the proportion per thousand of the caste in

the Derajat. Nafferton filed that bundle, and explained that the figures which he wanted referred to the Cis-Sutlej states, where he understood that Pigs were very fine and large, and where he proposed to start a Piggery. By this time Government had quite forgotten their instructions to Mr. Pinecoffin. They were like the gentlemen in Keats' poem, who turned well-oiled wheels to skin other people. But Pinecoffin was just entering into the spirit of the Pig-hunt, as Nafferton well knew he would do. He had a fair amount of work of his own to clear away ; but he sat up of nights reducing Pig to five places of decimals for the honour of his Service. He was not going to appear ignorant of so easy a subject as Pig.

Then Government sent him on special duty to Kohat, to 'inquire into' the big, seven-foot, iron-shod spades of that District. People had been killing each other with those peaceful tools ; and Government wished to know 'whether a modified form of agricultural implement could not, tentatively and as a temporary measure, be introduced among the agricultural population without needlessly or unduly exacerbating the existing religious sentiments of the peasantry.'

Between those spades and Nafferton's Pig, Pinecoffin was rather heavily burdened.

Nafferton now began to take up '(a) The food-supply of the indigenous Pig, with a view to the improvement of its capacities as a flesh-former. (b) The acclimatisation of the exotic Pig, maintaining its distinctive peculiarities.' Pinecoffin replied exhaustively that the exotic Pig would become merged in the indigenous type ; and quoted horse-



breeding statistics to prove this. The side-issue was debated at great length on Pinecoffin's side, till Nafferton owned that he had been in the wrong, and moved the previous question. When Pinecoffin had quite written himself out about flesh-formers, and fibrins, and glucose, and the nitrogenous constituents of maize and lucerne, Nafferton raised the question of expense. By this time Pinecoffin, who had been transferred from Kohat, had developed a Pig theory of his own, which he stated in thirty-three folio pages—all carefully filed by Nafferton; who asked for more.

These things took ten months, and Pinecoffin's interest in the potential Piggery seemed to die down after he had stated his own views. But Nafferton bombarded him with letters on 'the Imperial aspect of the scheme, as tending to officialise the sale of pork, and thereby calculated to give offence to the Mahommedan population of Upper India.' He guessed that Pinecoffin would want some broad, free-hand work after his niggling, stippling, decimal details. Pinecoffin handled the latest development of the case in masterly style, and proved that no 'popular ebullition of excitement was to be apprehended.' Nafferton said that there was nothing like Civilian insight in matters of this kind, and lured him up a by-path—the possible profits to accrue to the Government from the sale of hog-bristles.' There is an extensive literature of hog-bristles, and the shoe, brush, and colourman's trades recognise more varieties of bristles than you would think possible. After Pinecoffin had wondered a little at Nafferton's rage for information, he sent back a monograph,

fifty-one pages, on 'Products of the Pig.' This led him, under Nafferton's tender handling, straight to the Cawnpore factories, the trade in hog-skin for saddles—and thence to the tanners. Pinecoffin wrote that pomegranate-seed was the best cure for hog-skin, and suggested—for the past fourteen months had wearied him—that Nafferton should 'raise his pigs before he tanned them.'

Nafferton went back to the second section of his fifth question. How could the exotic Pig be brought to give as much pork as it did in the West and yet 'assume the essentially hirsute characteristics of its Oriental congener'? Pinecoffin felt dazed, for he had forgotten what he had written sixteen months before, and fancied that he was about to reopen the entire question. He was too far involved in the hideous tangle to retreat, and, in a weak moment, he wrote, 'Consult my first letter'; which related to the Dravidian Pig. As a matter of fact, Pinecoffin had still to reach the acclimatisation stage; having gone off on a side-issue on the merging of types.

*Then* Nafferton really unmasked his batteries! He complained to the Government, in stately language, of 'the paucity of help accorded to me in my earnest attempts to start a potentially remunerative industry, and the flippancy with which my requests for information are treated by a gentleman whose pseudo-scholarly attainments should at least have taught him the primary differences between the Dravidian and the Berkshire variety of the genus *Sus*. If I am to understand that the letter to which he refers me contains his serious views on the acclimatisation of a

valuable, though possibly uncleanly, animal, I am reluctantly compelled to believe,' etc. etc.

There was a new man at the head of the Department of Castigation. The wretched Pinecoffin was told that the Service was made for the Country, and not the Country for the Service, and that he had better begin to supply information about Pig.

Pinecoffin answered insanely that he had written everything that could be written about Pig, and that some furlough was due to him.

Nafferton got a copy of that letter, and sent it, with the essay on the Dravidian Pig, to a down-country paper which printed both in full. The essay was rather high-flown ; but if the Editor had seen the stacks of paper, in Pinecoffin's handwriting, on Nafferton's table, he would not have been so sarcastic about the 'nebulous discursiveness and blatant self-sufficiency of the modern Competition-wallah, and his utter inability to grasp the practical issues of a practical question.' Many friends cut out these remarks and sent them to Pinecoffin.

I have already stated that Pinecoffin came of a soft stock. This last stroke frightened and shook him. He could not understand it ; but he felt that he had been, somehow, shamelessly betrayed by Nafferton. He realised that he had wrapped himself up in the Pigskin without need, and that he could not well set himself right with his Government. All his acquaintances asked after his 'nebulous discursiveness' or his 'blatant self-sufficiency,' and this made him miserable.

He took a train and went to Nafferton, whom he had not seen since the Pig business began. He also

took the cutting from the paper, and blustered feebly and called Nafferton names, and then died down to a watery, weak protest of the 'I-say-it's-too-bad-you-know' order.

Nafferton was very sympathetic.

'I'm afraid I've given you a good deal of trouble, haven't I?' said he.

'Trouble!' whimpered Pinecoffin; 'I don't mind the trouble so much, though that was bad enough; but what I resent is this showing up in print. It will stick to me like a burr all through my service. And I *did* do my best for your interminable swine. It's too bad of you—on my soul it is!'

'I don't know,' said Nafferton. 'Have you ever been stuck with a horse? It isn't the money I mind, though that is bad enough; but what I resent is the chaff that follows, especially from the boy who stuck me. But I think we'll cry quits now.'

Pinecoffin found nothing to say save bad words; and Nafferton smiled ever so sweetly, and asked him to dinner.

## ALNASCHAR AND THE OXEN

THERE'S a pasture in a valley where the hanging  
woods divide,

And a Herd lies down and ruminates in peace ;  
Where the pheasant rules the nooning, and the owl  
the twilight tide,

And the war-cries of our world die out and cease.  
Here I cast aside the burden that each weary week-  
day brings

And, delivered from the shadows I pursue,  
On peaceful, postless Sabbaths I consider Weighty  
Things—

Such as Sussex Cattle feeding in the dew !

At the gate beside the river where the trouty shallows  
brawl,

I know the pride that Lobengula felt,  
When he bade the bars be lowered of the Royal Cattle  
Kraal,

And fifteen miles of oxen took the veldt.  
From the walls of Bulawayo in unbroken file they  
came

To where the Mount of Council cuts the blue . . .  
I have only six-and-twenty, but the principle's the  
same

With my Sussex Cattle feeding in the dew !

To a luscious sound of tearing, where the clovered  
herbage rips,

Level-backed and level-bellied watch 'em move—  
See those shoulders, guess that heart-girth, praise  
those loins, admire those hips,

And the tail set low for flesh to make above !  
Count the broad unblemished muzzles, test the  
kindly mellow skin

And, where yon heifer lifts her head at call,  
Mark the bosom's just abundance 'neath the gay and  
clean-cut chin,

And those eyes of Juno, overlooking all !

Here is colour, form and substance ! I will put it to  
the proof

And, next season, in my lodges shall be born  
Some very Bull of Mithras, flawless from his agate  
hoof

To his even-branching, ivory, dusk-tipped horn.  
He shall mate with block-square virgins—kings shall  
seek his like in vain,

While I multiply his stock a thousandfold,  
Till an hungry world extol me, builder of a lofty  
strain

That turns one standard ton at two years old !

*There's a valley, under oakwood, where a man may  
dream his dream,*

*In the milky breath of cattle laid at ease,  
Till the moon o'ertops the alders, and her image chills  
the stream,*

*And the river-mist runs silver round their knees !*

*Now the footpaths fade and vanish ; now the ferny  
clumps deceive ;*

*Now the hedgerow-folk possess their fields anew ;  
Now the Herd is lost in darkness, and I bless them as  
I leave,*

*My Sussex Cattle feeding in the dew !*

## THE BULL THAT THOUGHT

WESTWARD from a town by the Mouths of the Rhône, runs a road so mathematically straight, so barometrically level, that it ranks among the world's measured miles and motorists use it for records.

I had attacked the distance several times, but always with a Mistral blowing, or the unchancy cattle of those parts on the move. But once, running from the East, into a high-piled, almost Egyptian, sunset, there came a night which it would have been sin to have wasted. It was warm with the breath of summer in advance ; moonlit till the shadow of every rounded pebble and pointed cypress wind-break lay solid on that vast flat-floored waste ; and my Mr. Leggatt, who had slipped out to make sure, reported that the road-surface was unblemished.

'Now,' he suggested, 'we might see what she'll do under strict road-conditions. She's been pullin' like the Blue de Luxe all day. Unless I'm all off, it's her night out.'

We arranged the trial for after dinner—thirty kilometres as near as might be ; and twenty-two of them without even a level crossing.

There sat beside me at table d'hôte an elderly, bearded Frenchman wearing the rosette of by no means the lowest grade of the Legion of Honour,



who had arrived in a talkative Citroën. I gathered that he had spent much of his life in the French Colonial Service in Annam and Tonquin. When the War came, his years barring him from the front line, he had supervised Chinese wood-cutters who, with axe and dynamite, deforested the centre of France for trench-props. He said my chauffeur had told him that I contemplated an experiment. He was interested in cars—had admired mine—would, in short, be greatly indebted to me if I permitted him to assist as an observer. One could not well refuse ; and, knowing my Mr. Leggatt, it occurred to me there might also be a bet in the background.

While he went to get his coat, I asked the proprietor his name. 'Voiron—Monsieur André Voiron,' was the reply. 'And his business ?' 'Mon Dieu ! He is Voiron ! He is all those things, there !' The proprietor waved his hands at brilliant advertisements on the dining-room walls, which declared that Voiron Frères dealt in wines, agricultural implements, chemical manures, provisions and produce throughout that part of the globe.

He said little for the first five minutes of our trip, and nothing at all for the next ten—it being, as Leggatt had guessed, Esmeralda's night out. But, when her indicator climbed to a certain figure and held there for three blinding kilometres, he expressed himself satisfied, and proposed to me that we should celebrate the event at the hotel. 'I keep yonder,' said he, 'a wine on which I should value your opinion.'

On our return, he disappeared for a few minutes, and I heard him rumbling in a cellar. The pro-

prietor presently invited me to the dining-room, where, beneath one frugal light, a table had been set with local dishes of renown. There was, too, a bottle beyond most known sizes, marked black on red, with a date. Monsieur Voiron opened it, and we drank to the health of my car. The velvety, perfumed liquor, between fawn and topaz, neither too sweet nor too dry, creamed in its generous glass. But I knew no wine composed of the whispers of angels' wings, the breath of Eden and the foam and pulse of Youth renewed. So I asked what it might be.

'It is champagne,' he said gravely.

'Then what have I been drinking all my life?'

'If you were lucky, before the War, and paid thirty shillings a bottle, it is possible you may have drunk one of our better-class *tisanes*.'

'And where does one get this?'

'Here, I am happy to say. Elsewhere, perhaps, it is not so easy. We growers exchange these real wines among ourselves.'

I bowed my head in admiration, surrender, and joy. There stood the most ample bottle, and it was not yet eleven o'clock. Doors locked and shutters banged throughout the establishment. Some last servant yawned on his way to bed. Monsieur Voiron opened a window and the moonlight flooded in from a small pebbled court outside. One could almost hear the town of Chambres breathing in its first sleep. Presently, there was a thick noise in the air, the passing of feet and hooves, lowings, and a stifled bark or two. Dust rose over the courtyard wall, followed by the strong smell of cattle.

'They are moving some beasts,' said Monsieur

Voiron, cocking an ear. 'Mine, I think. Yes, I hear Christophe. Our beasts do not like automobiles—so we move at night. You do not know our country—the Crau, here, or the Camargue? I was—I am now, again—of it. All France is good; but this is the best.' He spoke, as only a Frenchman can, of his own loved part of his own lovely land.

'For myself, if I were not so involved in all these affairs'—he pointed to the advertisements—'I would live on our farm with my cattle, and worship them like a Hindu. You know our cattle of the Camargue, Monsieur? No? It is not an acquaintance to rush upon lightly. There are no beasts like them. They have a mentality superior to that of others. They graze and they ruminate, by choice, facing our Mistral, which is more than some automobiles will do. Also they have in them the potentiality of thought; and when cattle think—I have seen what arrives.'

'Are they so clever as all that?' I asked idly.

'Monsieur, when your *sportif* chauffeur camouflaged your limousine so that she resembled one of your Army lorries, I would not believe her capacities. I bet him—ah—two to one—she would not touch ninety kilometres. It was proved that she could. I can give you no proof, but will you believe me if I tell you what a beast who thinks can achieve?'

'After the War,' said I spaciouly, 'everything is credible.'

'That is true! Everything inconceivable has happened; but still we learn nothing and we believe nothing. When I was a child in my father's house—before I became a Colonial Administrator—my

interest and my affection were among our cattle. We of the old rock live here—have you seen?—in big farms like castles. Indeed, some of them may have been Saracenic. The barns group round them—great white-walled barns, and yards solid as our houses. One gate shuts all. It is a world apart; an administration of all that concerns beasts. It was there I learned something about cattle. You see, they are our playthings in the Camargue and the Crau. The boy measures his strength against the calf that butts him in play among the manure-heaps. He moves in and out among the cows, who are—not so amiable. He rides with the herdsmen in the open to shift the herds. Sooner or later, he meets as bulls the little calves that knocked him over. So it was with me—till it became necessary that I should go to our Colonies.’ He laughed. ‘Very necessary. That is a good time in youth, Monsieur, when one does these things which shock our parents. *Why* is it always Papa who is so shocked and has never heard of such things—and Mamma who supplies the excuses? . . . And when my brother—my elder who stayed and created the business—begged me to return and help him, I resigned my Colonial career gladly enough. I returned to our own lands, and my well-loved, wicked white and yellow cattle of the Camargue and the Crau. My Faith, I could talk of them all night, for this stuff unlocks the heart, without making repentance in the morning. . . . Yes ! It was after the War that this happened. There was a calf, among Heaven knows how many of ours—a bull-calf—an infant indistinguishable from his companions. He was sick, and he had been taken up

with his mother into the big farmyard at home with us. Naturally the children of our herdsmen practised on him from the first. It is in their blood. The Spaniards make a cult of bull-fighting. Our little devils down here bait bulls as automatically as the English child kicks or throws balls. This calf would chase them with his eyes open, like a cow when she hunts a man. They would take refuge behind our tractors and wine-carts in the centre of the yard : he would chase them in and out as a dog hunts rats. More than that, he would study their psychology, his eyes in their eyes. Yes, he watched their faces to divine which way they would run. He himself, also, would pretend sometimes to charge directly at a boy. Then he would wheel right or left—one could never tell—and knock over some child pressed against a wall who thought himself safe. After this, he would stand over him, knowing that his companions must come to his aid ; and when they were all together, waving their jackets across his eyes and pulling his tail, he would scatter them—how he would scatter them ! He could kick, too, sideways like a cow. He knew his ranges as well as our gunners, and he was as quick on his feet as our Carpentier. I observed him often. Christophe—the man who passed just now—our chief herdsman, who had taught me to ride with our beasts when I was ten—Christophe told me that he was descended from a yellow cow of those days that had chased us once into the marshes. “He kicks just like her,” said Christophe. “He can side-kick as he jumps. Have you seen, too, that he is not deceived by the jacket when a boy waves it ? He uses

it to find the boy. They think they are feeling him. He is feeling them always. He thinks, that one." I had come to the same conclusion. Yes—the creature was a thinker along the lines necessary to his sport ; and he was a humorist also, like so many natural murderers. One knows the type among beasts as well as among men. It possesses a curious truculent mirth—almost indecent but infallibly significant——'

Monsieur Voiron replenished our glasses with the great wine that went better at each descent.

'They kept him for some time in the yards to practise upon. Naturally he became a little brutal ; so Christophe turned him out to learn manners among his equals in the grazing lands, where the Camargue joins the Crau. How old was he then ? About eight or nine months, I think. We met again a few months later—he and I. I was riding one of our little half-wild horses, along a road of the Crau, when I found myself almost unseated. It was he ! He had hidden himself behind a wind-break till we passed, and had then charged my horse from behind. Yes, he had deceived even my little horse ! But I recognised him. I gave him the whip across the nose, and I said : " Apis, for this thou goest to Arles ! It was unworthy of thee, between us two." But that creature had no shame. He went away laughing, like an Apache. If he had dismounted me, I do not think it is I who would have laughed—yearling as he was.'

'Why did you want to send him to Arles ?' I asked.

'For the bull-ring. When your charming tourists

leave us, we institute our little amusements there. Not a real bull-fight, you understand, but young bulls with padded horns, and our boys from hereabouts and in the city go to play with them. Naturally, before we send them we try them in our yards at home. So we brought up Apis from his pastures. He knew at once that he was among the friends of his youth—he almost shook hands with them—and he submitted like an angel to padding his horns. He investigated the carts and tractors in the yards, to choose his lines of defence and attack. And then—he attacked with an *élan*, and he defended with a tenacity and forethought that delighted us. In truth, we were so pleased that I fear we trespassed upon his patience. We desired him to repeat himself, which no true artist will tolerate. But he gave us fair warning. He went out to the centre of the yard, where there was some dry earth; he kneeled down and—you have seen a calf whose horns fret him thrusting and rooting into a bank? He did just that, very deliberately, till he had rubbed the pads off his horns. Then he rose, dancing on those wonderful feet that twinkled, and he said: “Now, my friends, the buttons are off the foils. Who begins?” We understood. We finished at once. He was turned out again on the pastures till it should be time to amuse them at our little metropolis. But, some time before he went to Arles—yes, I think I have it correctly—Christophe, who had been out on the Crau, informed me that Apis had assassinated a young bull who had given signs of developing into a rival. That happens, of course, and our herdsmen should prevent it. But Apis had killed in his own

style—at dusk, from the ambush of a wind-break—by an oblique charge from behind which knocked the other over. He had then disembowelled him. All very possible, *but*—the murder accomplished—Apis went to the bank of a wind-break, knelt, and carefully, as he had in our yard, cleaned his horns in the earth. Christophe, who had never seen such a thing, at once borrowed (do you know, it is most efficacious when taken that way ?) some Holy Water from our little chapel in those pastures, sprinkled Apis (whom it did not affect), and rode in to tell me. It was obvious that a thinker of that bull's type would also be meticulous in his toilette ; so, when he was sent to Arles, I warned our consignees to exercise caution with him. Happily, the change of scene, the music, the general attention, and the meeting again with old friends—all our bad boys attended—agreeably distracted him. He became for the time a pure *farceur* again ; but his wheelings, his rushes, his rat-huntings were more superb than ever. There was in them now, you understand, a breadth of technique that comes of reasoned art, and, above all, the passion that arrives after experience. Oh, he had learned, out there on the Crau ! At the end of his little turn, he was, according to local rules, to be handled in all respects except for the sword, which was a stick, as a professional bull who must die. He was manoeuvred into, or he posed himself in, the proper attitude ; made his rush ; received the point on his shoulder and then—turned about and cantered toward the door by which he had entered the arena. He said to the world : “ My friends, the representation is ended. I thank you for your applause. I go to repose



myself." But our Arlesians, who are—not so clever as some, demanded an encore, and Apis was headed back again. We others from his country, we knew what would happen. He went to the centre of the ring, kneeled, and, slowly, with full parade, plunged his horns alternately in the dirt till the pads came off. Christophe shouts : "Leave him alone, you straight-nosed imbeciles ! Leave him before you must." But they required emotion ; for Rome has always debauched her loved Provincia with bread and circuses. It was given. Have you, Monsieur, ever seen a servant, with pan and broom, sweeping round the base-board of a room ? In a half-minute Apis has them all swept out and over the barrier. Then he demands once more that the door shall be opened to him. It is opened and he retires as though—which, truly, is the case—loaded with laurels.'

Monsieur Voiron refilled the glasses, and allowed himself a cigarette, which he puffed for some time.

'And afterwards ?' I said.

'I am arranging it in my mind. It is difficult to do it justice. Afterwards—yes, afterwards—Apis returned to his pastures and his mistresses and I to my business. I am no longer a scandalous old *sportif* in shirt-sleeves howling encouragement to the yellow son of a cow. I revert to Voiron Frères—wines, chemical manures, *et cetera*. And next year, through some chicane which I have not the leisure to unravel, and also, thanks to our patriarchal system of paying our older men out of the increase of the herds, old Christophe possesses himself of Apis. Oh, yes, he proves it through descent from a certain cow that my father had given his father before the

Republic. Beware, Monsieur, of the memory of the illiterate man ! An ancestor of Christophe had been a soldier under our Soult against your Beresford, near Bayonne. He fell into the hands of Spanish guerrillas. Christophe and his wife used to tell me the details on certain Saints' Days when I was a child. Now, as compared with our recent War, Soult's campaign and retreat across the Bidassoa——'

'But did you allow Christophe just to annex the bull ?' I demanded.

'You do not know Christophe. He had sold him to the Spaniards before he informed me. The Spaniards pay in coin—douros of very pure silver. Our peasants mistrust our paper. You know the saying : "A thousand francs paper ; eight hundred metal, and the cow is yours." Yes, Christophe sold Apis, who was then two and a half years old, and to Christophe's knowledge thrice at least an assassin.'

'How was that ?' I said.

'Oh, his own kind only ; and always, Christophe told me, by the same oblique rush from behind, the same sideways overthrow, and the same swift disembowelment, followed by this levitical cleaning of the horns. In human life he would have kept a manicurist—this Minotaur. And so, Apis disappears from our country. That does not trouble me. I know in due time I shall be advised. Why ? Because, in this land, Monsieur, not a hoof moves between Berre and the Saintes Maries without the knowledge of specialists such as Christophe. The beasts are the substance and the drama of their lives to them. So when Christophe tells me, a little before Easter Sunday, that Apis makes his debut in

the bull-ring of a small Catalan town on the road to Barcelona, it is only to pack my car and trundle there across the frontier with him. The place lacked importance and manufactures, but it had produced a matador of some reputation, who was condescending to show his art in his native town. They were even running one special train to the place. Now our French railway system is only execrable, but the Spanish——'

'You went down by road, didn't you?' said I.

'Naturally. It was not too good. Villamarti was the matador's name. He proposed to kill two bulls for the honour of his birthplace. Apis, Christophe told me, would be his second. It was an interesting trip, and that little city by the sea was ravishing. Their bull-ring dates from the middle of the seventeenth century. It is full of feeling. The ceremonial too—when the horsemen enter and ask the Mayor in his box to throw down the keys of the bull-ring—that was exquisitely conceived. You know, if the keys are caught in the horseman's hat, it is considered a good omen. They were perfectly caught. Our seats were in the front row beside the gates where the bulls enter, so we saw everything.

'Villamarti's first bull was not too badly killed. The second matador, whose name escapes me, killed his without distinction—a foil to Villamarti. And the third, Chisto, a laborious, middle-aged professional who had never risen beyond a certain dull competence, was equally of the background. Oh, they are as jealous as the girls of the Comédie Française, these matadors! Villamarti's troupe stood ready for his second bull. The gates opened, and we saw Apis, beautifully balanced on his feet, peer

coquettishly round the corner, as though he were at home. A picador—a mounted man with the long lance-goat—stood near the barrier on his right. He had not even troubled to turn his horse, for the capeadors—the men with the cloaks—were advancing to play Apis—to feel his psychology and intentions, according to the rules that are made for bulls who do not think. . . . I did not realise the murder before it was accomplished ! The wheel, the rush, the oblique charge from behind, the fall of horse and man were simultaneous. Apis leaped the horse, with whom he had no quarrel, and alighted, all four feet together (it was enough), between the man's shoulders, changed his beautiful feet on the body and was away, pretending to fall nearly on his nose. Do you follow me ? In that instant, by that stumble, he produced the impression that his adorable assassination was a mere bestial blunder. Then, Monsieur, I began to comprehend that it was an artist we had to deal with. He did not stand over the body to draw the rest of the troupe. He chose to reserve that trick. He let the attendants bear out the dead, and went on to amuse himself among the capeadors. Now to Apis, trained among our children in the yards, the cloak was simply a guide to the boy behind it. He pursued, you understand, the person, not the propaganda—the proprietor, not the journal. If a third of our electors of France were as wise, my friend ! . . . But it was done leisurely, with humour and a touch of truculence. He romped after one man's cloak as a clumsy dog might do, but I observed that he kept the man on his terrible left side. Christophe whispered to me : " Wait for his mother's

kick. When he has made the fellow confident it will arrive." It arrived in the middle of a gambol. My God ! He lashed out in the air as he frisked. The man dropped like a sack, lifted one hand a little towards his head, and—that was all. So you see, a body was again at his disposition ; a second time the cloaks ran up to draw him off, but, a second time, Apis refused his grand scene. A second time he acted that his murder was accident and—he convinced his audience ! It was as though he had knocked over a bridge-gate in the marshes by mistake. Unbelievable ? I saw it.'

The memory sent Monsieur Voiron again to the champagne, and I accompanied him.

'But Apis was not the sole artist present. They say Villamarti comes of a family of actors. I saw him regard Apis with a new eye. He, too, began to understand. He took his cloak and moved out to play him before they should bring on another picador. He had his reputation. Perhaps Apis knew it. Perhaps Villamarti reminded him of some boy with whom he had practised at home. At any rate Apis permitted it—up to a certain point ; but he did not allow Villamarti the stage. He cramped him throughout. He dived and plunged clumsily and slowly, but always with menace and always closing in. We could see that the man was conforming to the bull—not the bull to the man ; for Apis was playing him towards the centre of the ring, and, in a little while—I watched his face—Villamarti knew it. But I could not fathom the creature's motive. "Wait," said old Christophe. "He wants that picador on the white horse yonder. When he reaches his proper

distance he will get him. Villamarti is his cover. He used me once that way." And so it was, my friend ! With the clang of one of our own Seventy-fives, Apis dismissed Villamarti with his chest-breasted him over—and had arrived at his objective near the barrier. The same oblique charge ; the head carried low for the sweep of the horns ; the immense sideways fall of the horse, broken-legged and half-paralysed ; the senseless man on the ground, and—behold Apis between them, backed against the barrier—his right covered by the horse ; his left by the body of the man at his feet. The simplicity of it ! Lacking the carts and tractors of his early parade-grounds he, being a genius, had extemporised with the materials at hand, and dug himself in. The troupe closed up again, their left wing broken by the kicking horse, their right immobilised by the man's body which Apis bestrode with significance. Villamarti almost threw himself between the horns, but—it was more an appeal than an attack. Apis refused him. He held his base. A picador was sent at him—necessarily from the front, which alone was open. Apis charged—he who, till then, you realise, had not used the horn ! The horse went over backwards, the man half beneath him. Apis halted, hooked him under the heart, and threw him to the barrier. We heard his head crack, but he was dead before he hit the wood. There was no demonstration from the audience. They, also, had begun to realise this Foch among bulls ! The arena occupied itself again with the dead. Two of the troupe irresolutely tried to play him—God knows in what hope !—but he moved out to the centre of the ring.

"Look!" said Christophe. "Now he goes to clean himself. That always frightened me." He knelt down; he began to clean his horns. The earth was hard. He worried at it in an ecstasy of absorption. As he laid his head along and rattled his ears, it was as though he were interrogating the Devils themselves upon their secrets, and always saying impatiently: "Yes, I know that—and *that*—and *that*! Tell me more—*more*!" In the silence that covered us, a woman cried: "He digs a grave! Oh, Saints, he digs a grave!" Some others echoed this—not loudly—as a wave echoes in a grotto of the sea.

'And when his horns were cleaned, he rose up and studied poor Villamarti's troupe, eyes in eyes, one by one, with the gravity of an equal in intellect and the remote and merciless resolution of a master in his art. This was more terrifying than his toilette.'

'And they—Villamarti's men?' I asked.

'Like the audience, were dominated. They had ceased to posture, or stamp, or address insults to him. They conformed to him. The two other matadors stared. Only Chisto, the oldest, broke silence with some call or other, and Apis turned his head towards him. Otherwise he was isolated, immobile—sombre—meditating on those at his mercy. Ah!

'For some reason the trumpet sounded for the *banderillas*—those gay hooked darts that are planted in the shoulders of bulls who do not think, after their neck-muscles are tired by lifting horses. When such bulls feel the pain, they check for an instant, and, in that instant, the men step gracefully aside. Villamarti's banderillero answered the trumpet mechanically—like one condemned. He stood out, poised the

darts and stammered the usual patter of invitation. . . . And after ? I do not assert that Apis shrugged his shoulders, but he reduced the episode to its lowest elements, as could only a bull of Gaul. With his truculence was mingled always—owing to the shortness of his tail—a certain Rabelaisian abandon, especially when viewed from the rear. Christophe had often commented upon it. Now, Apis brought that quality into play. He circulated round that boy, forcing him to break up his beautiful poses. He studied him from various angles, like an incompetent photographer. He presented to him every portion of his anatomy except his shoulders. At intervals he feigned to run in upon him. My God, he was cruel ! But his motive was obvious. He was playing for a laugh from the spectators which should synchronise with the fracture of the human morale. It was achieved. The boy turned and ran towards the barrier. Apis was on him before the laugh ceased ; passed him ; headed him—what do I say ?—herded him off to the left, his horns beside and a little in front of his chest : he did not intend him to escape into a refuge. Some of the troupe would have closed in, but Villamarti cried : “ If he wants him he will take him. Stand ! ” They stood. Whether the boy slipped or Apis nosed him over I could not see. But he dropped, sobbing. Apis halted like a car with four brakes, struck a pose, smelt him very completely and turned away. It was dismissal more ignominious than degradation at the head of one’s battalion. The representation was finished. Remained only for Apis to clear his stage of the subordinate characters.



‘Ah ! His gesture then ! He gave a dramatic start—this Cyrano of the Camargue—as though he was aware of them for the first time. He moved. All their beautiful breeches twinkled for an instant along the top of the barrier. He held the stage alone ! But Christophe and I, we trembled ! For, observe, he had now involved himself in a stupendous drama of which he only could supply the third act. And, except for an audience on the razor-edge of emotion, he had exhausted his material. Molière himself—we have forgotten, my friend, to drink to the health of that great soul—might have been at a loss. And Tragedy is but a step behind Failure. We could see the four or five Civil Guards, who are sent always to keep order, fingering the breeches of their rifles. They were but waiting a word from the Mayor to fire on him, as they do sometimes at a bull who leaps the barrier among the spectators. They would, of course, have killed or wounded several people—but that would not have saved Apis.’

Monsieur Voiron drowned the thought at once, and wiped his beard.

‘At that moment Fate—the Genius of France, if you will—sent to assist in the incomparable finale, none other than Chisto, the eldest, and I should have said (but never again will I judge !) the least inspired of all ; mediocrity itself but, at heart—and it is the heart that conquers always, my friend—at heart an artist. He descended stiffly into the arena, alone and assured. Apis regarded him, his eyes in his eyes. The man took stance, with his cloak, and called to the bull as to an equal : “ Now, Señor, we will show these honourable caballeros something

together." He advanced thus against this thinker who at a plunge—a kick—a thrust—could, we all knew, have extinguished him. My dear friend, I wish I could convey to you something of the unaffected bonhomie, the humour, the delicacy, the consideration bordering on respect even, with which Apis, the supreme artist, responded to this invitation. It was the Master, wearied after a strenuous hour in the atelier, unbuttoned and at ease with some not inexperienced but limited disciple. The telepathy was instantaneous between them. And for good reason ! Christophe said to me : " All's well. That Chisto began among the bulls. I was sure of it when I heard him call just now. He has been a herdsman. He'll pull it off." There was a little feeling and adjustment, at first, for mutual distances and allowances.

' Oh, yes ! And here occurred a gross impertinence of Villamarti. He had, after an interval, followed Chisto—to retrieve his reputation. My Faith ! I can conceive the elder Dumas slamming his door on an intruder precisely as Apis did. He raced Villamarti into the nearest refuge at once. He stamped his feet outside it, and he snorted : " Go ! I am engaged with an artist." Villamarti went—his reputation left behind for ever.

' Apis returned to Chisto saying : " Forgive the interruption. I am not always master of my time, but you were about to observe, my dear confrère . . . ?" Then the play began. Out of compliment to Chisto, Apis chose as his objective (every bull varies in this respect) the inner edge of the cloak—that nearest to the man's body. This allows but a few millimetres

clearance in charging. But Apis trusted himself as Chisto trusted him, and, this time, he conformed to the man, with inimitable judgment and temper. He allowed himself to be played into the shadow or the sun, as the delighted audience demanded. He raged enormously ; he feigned defeat ; he despaired in statuesque abandon, and thence flashed into fresh paroxysms of wrath—but always with the detachment of the true artist who knows he is but the vessel of an emotion whence others, not he, must drink. And never once did he forget that honest Chisto's cloak was to him the gauge by which to spare even a hair on the skin. He inspired Chisto too. My God ! His youth returned to that meritorious beef-sticker—the desire, the grace, and the beauty of his early dreams. One could almost see that girl of the past for whom he was rising, rising to these present heights of skill and daring. It was his hour too—a miraculous hour of dawn returned to gild the sunset. All he knew was at Apis' disposition. Apis acknowledged it with all that he had learned at home, at Arles and in his lonely murders on our grazing-grounds. He flowed round Chisto like a river of death—round his knees, leaping at his shoulders, kicking just clear of one side or the other of his head ; behind his back hissing as he shaved by ; and once or twice—inimitable !—he reared wholly up before him while Chisto slipped back from beneath the avalanche of that instructed body. Those two, my dear friend, held five thousand people dumb with no sound but of their breathings—regular as pumps. It was unbearable. Beast and man realised together that we needed a change of note—a *détente*.

They relaxed to pure buffoonery. Chisto fell back and talked to him outrageously. Apis pretended he had never heard such language. The audience howled with delight. Chisto slapped him ; he took liberties with his short tail, to the end of which he clung while Apis pirouetted ; he played about him in all postures ; he had become the herdsman again—gross, careless, brutal, but comprehending. Yet Apis was always the more consummate clown. All that time (Christophe and I saw it) Apis drew off towards the gates of the *toril* where so many bulls enter but—have you ever heard of one that returned ? We knew that Apis knew that as he had saved Chisto, so Chisto would save him. Life is sweet to us all ; to the artist who lives many lives in one, sweetest. Chisto did not fail him. At the last, when none could laugh any longer, the man threw his cape across the bull's back, his arm round his neck. He flung up a hand at the gate, as Villamarti, young and commanding but *not* a herdsman, might have raised it, and he cried : “Gentlemen, open to me and my honourable little donkey.” They opened—I have misjudged Spaniards in my time!—those gates opened to the man and the bull together, and closed behind them. And then ? From the Mayor to the Guardia Civil they went mad for five minutes, till the trumpets blew and the fifth bull rushed out—an unthinking black Andalusian. I suppose some one killed him. My friend, my very dear friend, to whom I have opened my heart, I confess that I did not watch. Christophe and I, we were weeping together like children of the same Mother. Shall we drink to Her ? ’

## PROLOGUE TO THE MASTER-COOK'S TALE

WITH us there rade a Maister-Cook that came  
From the Rochelle which is neere Angoulême.  
Littel hee was, but rounder than a topp,  
And his small berd hadde dipped in manie a soppe.  
His honde was smother than beseemeth mann's,  
And his discoorse was all of marzipans,<sup>1</sup>  
Of tripes of Caen, or Burdeux snailés swote,<sup>2</sup>  
And Seinte Menhoulde wher cooken piggés-foote.<sup>3</sup>  
To Thoulouse and to Bress and Carcasson  
For pyes and fowles and chesnottes hadde hee  
wonne ; <sup>4</sup>  
Of hammés of Thuringie <sup>5</sup> colde hee prate,  
And well hee knew what Princes hadde on plate  
At Christmas-tide, from Artois to Gascogne.

<sup>1</sup> A kind of sticky sweetmeat.

<sup>2</sup> Bordeaux snails are specially large and sweet.

<sup>3</sup> They grill pigs'-feet still at St. Menehould, not far from Verdun, better than anywhere else in all the world.

<sup>4</sup> Gone—to get pâtés of ducks' liver at Toulouse ; fatted poultry at Bourg in Bresse, on the road to Geneva ; and very large chestnuts in sugar at Carcassonne, about forty miles from Toulouse.

<sup>5</sup> This would probably be some sort of wild-boar ham from Germany.

Lordinges, quod hee, manne liveth nat alone  
 By bred, but meatés rost and seethed, and broth,  
 And purchasable<sup>1</sup> deinties, on mine othe.  
 Honey and hote gingere well liketh hee,  
 And whalés-flesch mortred<sup>2</sup> with spicerie.  
 For, lat be all how man denie or carpe,<sup>3</sup>  
 Him thries a daie his hunger maketh sharpe,  
 And setteth him at boorde<sup>4</sup> with hawkés eyne,  
 Snuffing what dish is set beforne to deyne,  
 Nor, till with meate he all-to-fill to brim,  
 None other matter nowher mooveth him.  
 Lat holie Seintés sterve<sup>5</sup> as bookés boast,  
 Most mannés soule is in his bellie most.  
 For, as man thinketh in his hearte is hee,  
 But, as hee eateth so his thought shall bee.  
 And Holie Fader's self<sup>6</sup> (with reveraunce)  
 Oweth to Cooke his port and his presaunce.  
 Werbye it cometh past disputison<sup>7</sup>  
 Cookes over alle men have dominion,  
 Which follow them as schippe her gouvernail.<sup>8</sup>  
 Enoff of wordes—beginneth heere my tale :—

<sup>1</sup> Expensive.

<sup>2</sup> Beaten up.

<sup>3</sup> Sneer or despise.

<sup>4</sup> Brings him to table.

<sup>5</sup> Starve.

<sup>6</sup> The Pope himself, who depends on his cook for being healthy and well-fed.

<sup>7</sup> Dispute or argument.

<sup>8</sup> Men are influenced by their cooks as ships are steered by their rudders.

## HIS GIFT

HIS Scoutmaster and his comrades, who disagreed on several points, were united in one conviction—that William Glasse Sawyer was, without exception, the most unprofitable person, not merely in the Pelican Troop, who lived in the wilderness of the 47th Postal District, London, S.E., but in the whole body of Boy Scouts throughout the world.

No one, except a ferocious uncle who was also a French-polisher, seemed responsible for his beginnings. There was a legend that he had been entered as a Wolf-Cub at the age of eight, under Miss Doughty, whom the uncle had either bribed or terrorised to accept him; and that after six months Miss Doughty confessed that she could make nothing of him and retired to teach school in the Yorkshire moors. There is also a red-headed ex-cub of that troop (he is now in a shipping-office) who asserts proudly that he used to bite William Glasse Sawyer on the leg in the hope of waking him up, and takes most of the credit for William's present success. But when William moved into the larger life of the Pelicans, who were gay birds, he was not what you might call alert. In shape he resembled the ace of diamonds; in colour he was an oily sallow.

He could accomplish nothing that required one

glimmer of reason, thought or commonsense. He cleaned himself only under bitter compulsion ; he lost his bearings equally in town or country after a five-minutes' stroll. He could track nothing smaller than a tram-car on a single line, and that only if there were no traffic. He could neither hammer a nail, carry an order, tie a knot, light a fire, notice any natural object, except food, or use any edged tool except a table-knife. To crown all, his innumerable errors and omissions were not even funny.

But it is an old law of human nature that if you hold to one known course of conduct—good or evil—you end by becoming an institution ; and when he was fifteen or thereabouts William achieved that position. The Pelicans gradually took pride in the notorious fact that they possessed the only Sealed Pattern, Mark A, Ass—an unique jewel, so to speak, of Absolute, Unalterable Incapacity. The poet of a neighbouring troop used to write verses about him, and recite them from public places, such as the tops of passing trams. William made no comment, but wrapped himself up in long silences that he seldom broke till the juniors of the Troop (the elders had given it up long before) tried to do him good turns with their scout-staves.

In private life he assisted his uncle at the mystery of French-polishing, which, he said, was 'boiling up things in pots and rubbing down bits of wood.' The boiling-up, he said, he did not mind so much. The rubbing-down he hated. Once, too, he volunteered that his uncle and only relative had been in the Navy, and 'did not like to be played with' ;



and the vision of William playing with any human being upset even his Scoutmaster.

Now it happened, upon a certain summer that was really a summer with heat to it, the Pelicans had been lent a dream of a summer camp in a dream of a park, which offered opportunities for every form of diversion, including bridging muddy-banked streams and unlimited cutting into young alders and undergrowth at large. A convenient village lay just outside the Park wall, and the ferny slopes round the camp were rich in rabbits, not to mention hedgehogs and other fascinating vermin. It was reached—Mr. Hale their Scoutmaster saw to that—after two days' hard labour, with the Troop push-cart, along sunny roads.

William's share in the affair was—what it had always been. First he lost most of his kit ; next his uncle talked to him after the fashion of the Navy of '96 before refitting him ; thirdly he went lame behind the push-cart by reason of a stone in his shoe, and on arrival in camp dropped—not for the first, second or third time—into his unhonoured office as Camp Orderly, and was placed at the disposal of The Prawn, whose light blue eyes stuck out from his freckled face, and whose long narrow chest was covered with badges. From that point on, the procedure was as usual. Once again did The Prawn assure his Scoutmaster that he would take enormous care of William and give him work suited to his capacity and intelligence. Once again did William grunt and wriggle at the news, and once again in the silence of the deserted camp next morning, while the rest of the Pelicans were joyously mucking them-

selves up to their young bills at bridging brooks, did he bow his neck to The Prawn's many orders. For The Prawn was a born organiser. He set William to unpack the push-cart and then to neatly and exactly replace all parcels, bags, tins, and boxes. He despatched him thrice in the forenoon across the hot Park to fetch water from a distant well equipped with a stiff-necked windlass and a split handle that pinched William's fat palms. He bade him collect sticks, thorny for choice, out of the flanks of a hedge full of ripe nettles against which Scout uniforms offer small protection. He then made him lay them in the camp cooking-place, carefully rejecting the green ones, for most sticks were alike to William ; and when everything else failed, he set him to pick up stray papers and rubbish the length and breadth of the camp. All that while, he not only chased him with comments but expected that William would show gratitude to him for forming his young mind.

'Tisn't every one 'ud take this amount o' trouble with you, Mug,' said The Prawn virtuously, when even his energetic soul could make no further work for his vassal. 'Now you open that bully-beef tin and we'll have something to eat, and then you're off duty—for a bit. I shall try my hand at a little camp-cooking.'

William found the tin—at the very bottom, of course, of the push-cart ; cut himself generously over the knuckles in opening it (till The Prawn showed him how this should be done), and in due course, being full of bread and bully, withdrew towards a grateful clump of high fern that he had

had his eye on for some time, wriggled deep into it, and on a little rabbit-browsed clearing of turf, stretched out and slept the sleep of the weary who have been up and under strict orders since six A.M. Till that hour of that day, be it remembered, William had given no proof either of intelligence or initiative in any direction.

He waked, slowly as was his habit, and noticed that the shadows were stretching a little, even as he stretched himself. Then he heard The Prawn clanking pot-lids, between soft bursts of song. William sniffed. The Prawn was cooking—was probably qualifying for something or other; The Prawn did nothing but qualify for badges. On reflection William discovered that he loved The Prawn even less this camp than the last, or the one before that. Then he heard the voice of a stranger.

‘Yes,’ was The Prawn’s reply. ‘I’m in charge of the camp. Would you like to look at it, sir?’

‘Seen ’em—seen heaps of ’em,’ said the unknown. ‘My son was in ’em once—Buffaloes, out Hendon-way. What are *you*?’

‘Well, just now I’m a sort of temporary Cook,’ said The Prawn, whose manners were far better than William’s.

‘Temp’ry! Temp’ry!’ the stranger puffed. ‘Can’t be a temp’ry cook any more’n you can be a temp’ry Parson. Not so much. Cookin’s cookin’! Let’s see *your* notions of cookin’.’

William had never heard any one address The Prawn in these tones, and somehow it cheered him. In the silence that followed he turned on his face and wriggled unostentatiously through the fern,

as a Scout should, till he could see that bold man without attracting The Prawn's notice. And this, too, was the first time that William had ever profited by the instruction of his Scoutmaster or the example of his comrades.

Heavenly sights rewarded him. The Prawn, visibly ill at ease, was shifting from one sinewy leg to the other, while an enormously fat little man with a pointed grey beard and arms like the fins of a fish investigated a couple of pots that hung on properly crutched sticks over the small fire that William had lighted in the cooking-place. He did not seem to approve of what he saw or smelt. And yet it was the impeccable Prawn's own cookery !

'Lor !' said he at last after more sniffs of contempt, as he replaced the lid. 'If you hot up things in tins, *that* ain't cookery. That's vittles—mere vittles ! And the way you've set that pot on, you're drawing all the nesty wood-smoke into the water. The spuds won't take much harm of it, but you've ruined the meat. *That is* meat, ain't it ? Get me a fork.'

William hugged himself. The Prawn, looking exactly like his namesake well-boiled, fetched a big fork. The little man prodded into the pot.

'It's stew !'

The Prawn explained, but his voice shook.

'Lor !' said the man again. 'It's boilin' ! It's boilin' ! You don't boil when you stew, my son ; an' as for *this*'—up came a grey slab of mutton—'there's no odds between this and motor-tyres. Well ! Well ! As I was sayin'——' He joined his hands behind his globular back and shook

his head in silence. After a while, The Prawn tried to assert himself.

'Cookin' isn't my strong point,' began The Prawn, 'but——'

'Pore boys! Pore boys!' the stranger soliloquised, looking straight in front of him. '*Pore* little boys! Wicked, *I* call it. They don't ever let you make bread, do they, my son?'

The Prawn said they generally bought their bread at a shop.

'Ah! I'm a shopkeeper meself. Marsh, the Baker here, is me. *Pore* boys! Well! Well! . . . Though it's against me own interest to say so, *I* think shops are wicked. They sell people things out o' tins which save 'em trouble, an' fill the 'ospitals with stummick-cases afterwards. An' the muck that's sold for flour. . . .' His voice faded away and he meditated again. 'Well! Well! *As I* was sayin'—— *Pore* boys! *Pore* boys! I'm glad you ain't askin' me to dinner. Good-bye.'

He rolled away across the fern, leaving The Prawn dumb behind him.

It seemed to William best to wriggle back in his cover as far as he could, ere The Prawn should call him to work again. He was not a Scout by instinct, but his uncle had shown him that when things went wrong in the world, some one generally passed it on to some one else. Very soon he heard his name called, acidly, several times. He crawled out from the far end of the fern-patch, rubbing his eyes, and The Prawn re-enslaved him on the spot. For once in his life William was alert and intelligent, but The

Prawn paid him no compliments, nor when the very muddy Pelicans came back from the bridging did The Prawn refer in any way to the visit of Mr. E. M. Marsh & Son, Bakers and Confectioners in the village street just outside the Park wall. Nor, for that matter, did he serve the Pelicans much besides tinned meats for their evening meal.

To say that William did not sleep a wink that night would be what has been called 'nature-faking'; which is a sin. His system demanded at least nine hours' rest, but he lay awake for quite twenty minutes, during which he thought intensely, rapidly and joyously. Had he been asked he would have said that his thoughts dealt solely with The Prawn and the judgment that had fallen upon him; but William was no psychologist. He did not know that hate—raging hate against a too-badged, too virtuous senior—had shot him into a new world, exactly as the large blunt shell is heaved through space and dropped into a factory, a garden or a barracks by the charge behind it. And, as the shell, which is but metal and mixed chemicals, needs the mere graze on the fuse to spread itself all over the landscape, so did his mind need but the touch of that hate to flare up and illuminate not only all his world, but his own way through it.

Next morning something sang in his ear that it was long since he had done good turns to any one except his uncle, who was slow to appreciate them. He would amend that error; and the more safely since The Prawn would be off all that day with the Troop on a tramp in the natural history line, and his place as Camp Warden and Provost Marshal would

be filled by the placid and easy-going Walrus, whose proper name was Carpenter, who never tried for badges, but who could not see a rabbit without going after him. And the owner of the Park had given full leave to the Pelicans to slay by any means, except a gun, any rabbits they could. So William ingratiated himself with his Superior Officer as soon as the Pelicans had left. . . .

No, the excellent Carpenter did not see that he needed William by his side all day. He might take himself and his bruised foot pretty much where he chose. He went, and this new and active mind of his that he did not realize, accompanied him—straight up the path of duty which, poetry tells us, is so often the road to glory.

He began by cleaning himself and his kit at seven o'clock in the morning, long before the village shops were open. This he did near a postern gate with a crack in it, in the Park wall, commanding a limited but quite sufficient view of the establishment of E. M. Marsh & Son across the street. It was perfect weather, and about eight o'clock Mr. Marsh himself in his shirt-sleeves rolled out to enjoy it before he took down the shutters. Hardly had he shifted the first of them when a fattish Boy Scout with a flat face and a slight limp laid hold of the second and began to slide it towards him.

'Well ! Well !' said Mr. Marsh. 'Ah ! Your good turn, eh ?'

'Yes,' said William briefly.

'That's right ! Handsomely now, handsomely,' for the shutter was jamming in its groove. William knew from his uncle that 'handsomely' meant

slowly and with care. The shutter responded to the coaxing. The others followed.

'Belay !' said Mr. Marsh, wiping his forehead, for, like William, he perspired easily. When he turned round William had gone. The Movies had taught him, though he knew it not, the value of dramatic effect. He continued to watch Mr. Marsh through the crack in the postern—it was the little wooden door at the end of the right of way through the Park—and when, an hour or so later, Mr. Marsh came out of his shop and headed towards it, William retired backwards into the high fern and brambles. The manœuvre would have rejoiced Mr. Hale's heart, for generally William moved like an elephant with its young. He turned up, quite casually, when Mr. Marsh had puffed his way again into the empty camp. Carpenter was off in pursuit of rabbits, with a pocket full of fine picture-wire. It was the first time William had ever done the honours of any establishment. He came to attention and smiled.

'Well ! Well !' Mr. Marsh nodded friendlyly. 'What are *you* ?'

'Camp-Guard,' said William, improvising for the first time in his life. 'Can I show you anything, sir ?'

'No, thank'ee. My son was a Scout once. I've just come to look round at things. 'No one tryin' any cookin' to-day ?'

'No, sir.'

''Bout's well. *Pore* boys ! What you goin' to have for dinner ? Tinned stuff ?'

'I expect so, sir.'

'D'you like it ?'



'Used to it.' William rather approved of this round person who wasted no time on abstract ideas.

'*Pore* boys! Well! Well! It saves trouble—for the present. Knots and splices in your stummick afterwards—in 'ospital.' Mr. Marsh looked at the cold camp cooking-place and its three big stones, and sniffed.

'Would you like it lit?' said William, suddenly.

'What for?'

'To cook with.'

'What d'*you* know about cookin'?' Mr. Marsh's little eyes opened wide.

'Nothing, sir.'

'What makes you think *I*'m a cook?'

'By the way you looked at our cooking-place,' the mendacious William answered. The Prawn had always urged him to cultivate habits of observation. They seemed easy—after you had observed the things.

'Well! Well! Quite a young Sherlock, you are. 'Don't think much o' *this*, though.' Mr. Marsh began to stoop to rearrange the open-air hearth to his liking.

'Show me how and I'll do it,' said William.

'Shove that stone a little more to the left then. Steady—So! That'll do! Got any wood? No? You slip across to the shop and ask them to give you some small brush-stuff from the oven. Stop! *And* my apron, too. Marsh is the name.'

William left him chuckling wheezily. When he returned Mr. Marsh clad himself in a long white apron of office which showed so clearly that Carpenter from far off returned at once.

'H'sh! H'sh!' said Mr. Marsh before he could speak. 'You carry on with what you're doing. Marsh is my name. My son was a Scout once. Buffaloes—Hendon-way. It's all right. Don't you grudge an old man enjoying himself.'

The Walrus looked amazedly at William moving in three directions at once with his face aflame.

'It's all right,' said William. 'He's giving us cooking-lessons.' Then—the words came into his mouth by themselves—'I'll take the responsibility.'

'Yes, yes! He knew I could cook. Quite a young Sherlock he is! *You* carry on.' Mr. Marsh turned his back on The Walrus and despatched William again with some orders to his shop across the road. 'And you'd better tell 'em to put 'em all in a basket,' he cried after him.

William returned with a fair assortment of mixed material, including eggs, two rashers of bacon, and a packet of patent flour, concerning which last Mr. Marsh said things no baker should say about his own goods. The frying-pan came out of the pushcart, with some other oddments, and it was not till after it was greased that Mr. Marsh demanded William's name. He got it in full, and it produced strange effects on the little fat man.

'An' 'ow do you spell your middle name?' he asked.

'G-l-a-double-s-e,' said William.

'Might that be your mother's?' William nodded. 'Well! Well! I wonder now! I *do* wonder. It's a great name. There was a Sawyer in the cookin' line once, but 'e was a Frenchman and spelt it different. Glasse is serious though.

And you say it was your ma's ?' He fell into an abstraction, frying-pan in hand. Anon, as he cracked an egg miraculously on its edge—'Whether you're a descendant or not, it's worth livin' up to, a name like that.'

'Why ?' said William, as the egg slid into the pan and spread as evenly as paint under an expert's hand.

'I'll tell you some day. She was a very great cook—but she'd have come expensive at to-day's prices. Now, you take the pan an' I'll draw me own conclusions.'

The boy worked the pan over the level red fire with a motion that he had learned somehow or other while 'boiling up' things for his uncle. It seemed to him natural and easy. Mr. Marsh watched in unbroken silence for at least two minutes.

'It's early to say—yet,' was his verdict. 'But I 'ave 'opes. You 'ave good 'ands, an' your knowin' I was a cook shows you 'ave the instinck. *If* you 'ave got the Touch—mark you, I only say *if*—but *if* you 'ave anything like the Genuine Touch, you're provided for for life. *An'* further—don't tilt her that way !—you 'old your neighbours, friends and employers in the 'ollow of your 'and.'

'How do you mean ?' said William, intent on his egg.

'Everything which a man *is* depends on what 'e puts inside 'im,' was the reply. 'A good cook's a King of men—besides being thunderin' well off *if* 'e don't drink. It's the only sure business in the whole round world ; and *I*'ve been round it eight times, in the Mercantile Marine, before I married the second Mrs. M.'

William, more interested in the pan than Mr. Marsh's marriages, made no reply. 'Yes, a good cook,' Mr. Marsh went on reminiscently, 'even on Board o' Trade allowance, 'as brought many a ship to port that 'ud otherwise 'ave mut'nied on the 'igh seas.'

The eggs and bacon mellowed together. Mr. Marsh supplied some wonderful last touches and the result was eaten, with The Walrus's help, sizzling out of the pan and washed down with some stone ginger-beer from the convenient establishment of Mr. E. M. Marsh outside the Park wall.

'I've ruined me dinner,' Mr. Marsh confided to the boys, 'but I 'aven't enjoyed myself like this, not since Noah was an able seaman. You wash up, young Sherlock, an' I'll tell you something.'

He filled an ancient pipe with eloquent tobacco, and while William scoured the pan, he held forth on the art and science and mystery of cooking as inspiredly as Mr. Jorrocks, Master of Foxhounds, had lectured upon the Chase. The burden of his song was Power—power which, striking directly at the stomach of man, makes the rudest polite, not to say sycophantic, towards a good cook, whether at sea, in camp, in the face of war, or (here he embellished his text with personal experiences) the crowded competitive cities where a good meal was as rare, he declared, as silk pyjamas in a pig-sty. 'An' mark you,' he concluded, 'three times a day the 'aughtiest and most overbearin' of 'em all 'ave to come crawlin' to you for a round belly-full. Put *that* in your pipe and smoke it out, young Sherlock !'

He unloosed his sacrificial apron and rolled away.

The Boy Scout is used to strangers who give him good advice on the smallest provocation ; but strangers who fill you up with bacon and eggs and ginger-beer are few.

‘ What started it all ? ’ The Walrus demanded.

‘ Well, I can’t exactly say,’ William answered, and as he had never been known to give a coherent account of anything, The Walrus returned to his wires, and William lay out and dreamed in the fern among the cattle-flies. He had dismissed The Prawn altogether from his miraculously enlarging mind. Very soon he was on the High Seas, a locality which till that instant had never appealed to him, in a gale, issuing bacon and eggs to crews on the edge of mutiny. Next, he was at war, turning the tides of it to victory for his own land by meals of bacon and eggs that brought bemedalled Generals in troops like Pelicans, to his fireplace. Then he was sustaining his uncle, at the door of an enormous restaurant, with plates of bacon and eggs sent out by gilded commissionaires such as guard the cinemas, while his uncle wept with gratitude and remorse, and The Prawn, badges and all, begged for scraps.

His chin struck his chest and half waked him to fresh flights of glory. He might have the Genuine Touch, Mr. Marsh had said it. Moreover, he, The Mug, had a middle name which filled that great man with respect. All the 47th Postal District should ring with that name, even to the exclusion of the racing-news, in its evening papers. And on his return from camp, or perhaps a day or two later, he would defy his very uncle and escape for ever from the foul business of French-polishing.

Here he slept generously and dreamlessly till evening, when the Pelicans returned, their pouches full of samples of uncookable vegetables and insects, and The Walrus made his report of the day's Camp doings to the Scoutmaster.

'Wait a minute, Walrus. You say The Mug actually *did* the cooking?'

'Mr. Marsh had him under instruction, sir. But The Mug did a lot of it—he held the pan over the fire. I saw him, sir. And he washed up afterwards.'

'Did he?' said the Scoutmaster lightly. 'Well, that's something.' But when The Walrus had gone Mr. Hale smote thrice upon his bare knees and laughed, as a Scout should, without noise.

He thanked Mr. Marsh next morning for the interest he had shown in the camp, and suggested (this was while he was buying many very solid buns for a route-march) that nothing would delight the Pelicans more than a few words from Mr. Marsh on the subject of cookery, if he could see his way to it.

'Quite so,' said Mr. Marsh. 'I'm worth listenin' to. Well! Well! I'll be along this evening, and, maybe, I'll bring some odds and ends with me. Send over young Sherlock-Glasse to 'elp me fetch 'em. *That's* a boy with 'is stummick in the proper place. 'Know anything about 'im?'

Mr. Hale knew a good deal, but he did not tell it all. He suggested that William himself should be approached, and would excuse him from the route-march for that purpose.

'Route-march!' said Mr. Marsh in horror.

'Lor ! The very worst use you can make of your feet is walkin' on 'em. 'Gives you bunions. Besides, 'e ain't got the figure for marches. 'E's a cook by build as well as instinck. 'Eavy in the run, oily in the skin, broad in the beam, short in the arm, *but*, mark you, light on the feet. That's the way cooks ought to be issued. You never 'eard of a really good *thin* cook yet, did you ? No. Nor me. An' I've known millions that called 'emselves cooks.'

Mr. Hale regretted that he had not studied the natural history of cooks, and sent William over early in the day.

Mr. Marsh spoke to the Pelicans for an hour that evening beside an open wood fire, from the ashes of which he drew forth (talking all the while) wonderful hot cakes called 'dampers' ; while from its top he drew off pans full of 'lobscouse,' which he said was not to be confounded with 'salmagundi,' and a hair-raising compound of bacon, cheese and onions all melted together. And while the Pelicans ate, he convulsed them with mirth or held them breathless with anecdotes of the High Seas and the World, so that the vote of thanks they passed him at the end waked all the cows in the Park. But William sat wrapped in visions, his hands twitching sympathetically to Mr. Marsh's wizardry among the pots and pans. He knew now what the name of Glasse signified ; for he had spent an hour at the back of the baker's shop reading, in a brown-leather book dated 1767 A.D. and called *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy by a Lady*, and that lady's name, as it appeared in facsimile at the head of Chap. I., was 'H. Glasse.' Torture would not have per-

sued him (or Mr. Marsh), by that time, that she was not his direct ancestress ; but, as a matter of form, he intended to ask his uncle.

When The Prawn, very grateful that Mr. Marsh had made no reference to his notions of cookery, asked William what he thought of the lecture and exhibition, William came out of his dreams with a start, and 'Oh, all right, I suppose, but I wasn't listening much.' Then The Prawn, who always improved an occasion, lectured him on lack of attention ; and William missed all that too. The question in his mind was whether his uncle would let him stay with Mr. Marsh for a couple of days after Camp broke up, or whether he would use the reply-paid telegram, which Mr. Marsh had sent him, for his own French-polishing concerns. When The Prawn's voice ceased, he not only promised to do better next time, but added, out of a vast and inexplicable pity that suddenly rose up inside him, 'And I'm grateful to you, Prawn. I am reelly.'

On his return to town from that wonder-revealing visit, he found the Pelicans treating him with a new respect. For one thing, The Walrus had talked about the bacon and eggs ; for another, The Prawn, who when he let himself go could be really funny, had given some artistic imitations of Mr. Marsh's comments on his cookery. Lastly, Mr. Hale had laid down that William's future employ would be to cook for the Pelicans when they camped abroad. 'And look out that you don't poison us too much,' he added.

There were occasional mistakes and some very



flat failures, but the Pelicans swallowed them all loyally ; no one had even a stomach-ache, and the office of Cook's mate to William was in great demand. The Prawn himself sought it next Spring when the Troop stole a couple of fair May days on the outskirts of a brick-field, and were very happy. But William set him aside in favour of a new and specially hopeless recruit ; oily-skinned, fat, short-armed, but light on his feet, and with some notion of lifting pot-lids without wrecking or flooding the whole fireplace.

'You see, Prawn,' he explained, 'cookin' isn't a thing one can just pick up.'

'Yes, I could—watchin' you,' The Prawn insisted.

'No. Mr. Marsh says it's a Gift—same as a Talent.'

'D'you mean to tell me Rickworth's got it, then ?'

'Dunno. It's *my* job to find that out—Mr. Marsh says. Anyway, Rickworth told me he liked cleaning out a fryin'-pan because it made him think of what it might be cookin' next time.'

'Well, if that isn't silliness, it's just greediness,' said The Prawn. 'What about those dampers you were talking of when I bought the fire-lighters for you this morning ?'

William drew one out of the ashes, tapped it lightly with his small hazel-wand of office, and slid it over, puffed and perfect, towards The Prawn.

Once again the wave of pity—the Master's pity for the mere consuming Public—swept over him as he watched The Prawn wolf it down.

'I'm grateful to you. I reelly *am*, Prawn,' said William Glasse Sawyer.

After all, as he was used to say in later years, if it hadn't been for The Prawn, where would he have been ?

## THE PRESS

THE Soldier may forget his Sword,  
The Sailor the Sea,  
The Mason may forget the Word  
And the Priest his Litany :  
The Maid may forget both jewel and gem,  
And the Bride her wedding-dress—  
But the Jew shall forget Jerusalem  
Ere we forget the Press !

Who once hath stood through the loaded hour  
Ere, roaring like the gale,  
The Harrild and the Hoe devour  
Their league-long paper bale,  
And hath lit his pipe in the morning calm  
That follows the midnight stress—  
He hath sold his heart to the old Black Art  
We call the daily Press.

Who once hath dealt in the widest game  
That all of a man can play,  
No later love, no larger fame  
Will lure him long away.  
As the war-horse smelleth the battle afar,  
The entered Soul, no less,  
He saith : ' Ha ! Ha ! ' where the trumpets are  
And the thunders of the Press !

Canst thou number the days that we fulfil,  
Or the *Times* that we bring forth ?  
Canst thou send the lightnings to do thy will,  
And cause them reign on earth ?  
Hast thou given a peacock goodly wings,  
To please his foolishness ?  
Sit down at the heart of men and things,  
Companion of the Press !

The Pope may launch his Interdict,  
The Union its decree,  
But the bubble is blown and the bubble is pricked  
By Us and such as We.  
Remember the battle and stand aside  
While Thrones and Powers confess  
That King over all the children of pride  
Is the Press—the Press—the Press !

## THE VILLAGE THAT VOTED THE EARTH WAS FLAT

(1913)

OUR drive till then had been quite a success. The other men in the car were my friend Woodhouse, young Ollyett, a distant connection of his, and Pallant, the M.P. Woodhouse's business was the treatment and cure of sick journals. He knew by instinct the precise moment in a newspaper's life when the impetus of past good management is exhausted and it fetches up on the dead-centre between slow and expensive collapse and the new start which can be given by gold injections—and genius. He was wisely ignorant of journalism ; but when he stooped on a carcase there was sure to be meat. He had that week added a half-dead, halfpenny evening paper to his collection, which consisted of a prosperous London daily, one provincial ditto, and a limp-bodied weekly of commercial leanings. He had also, that very hour, planted me with a large block of the evening paper's common shares, and was explaining the whole art of editorship to Ollyett, a young man three years from Oxford, with coir-matting-coloured hair and a face harshly modelled by harsh experiences, who, I understood, was assisting in the new venture. Pallant, the long, wrinkled

M.P., whose voice is more like a crane's than a peacock's, took no shares, but gave us all advice.

'You'll find it rather a knacker's yard,' Woodhouse was saying. 'Yes, I know they call me The Knacker; but it will pay inside a year. All my papers do. I've only one motto: Back your luck and back your staff. It'll come out all right.'

Then the car stopped, and a policeman asked our names and addresses for exceeding the speed-limit. We pointed out that the road ran absolutely straight for half a mile ahead without even a side-lane. 'That's just what we depend on,' said the policeman unpleasantly.

'The usual swindle,' said Woodhouse under his breath. 'What's the name of this place?'

'Huckley,' said the policeman. 'H-u-c-k-l-e-y,' and wrote something in his note-book at which young Ollyett protested. A large red man on a grey horse who had been watching us from the other side of the hedge shouted an order we could not catch. The policeman laid his hand on the rim of the right driving-door (Woodhouse carries his spare tyres aft), and it closed on the button of the electric horn. The grey horse at once bolted, and we could hear the rider swearing all across the landscape.

'Damn it, man, you've got your silly fist on it! Take it off!' Woodhouse shouted.

'Ho!' said the constable, looking carefully at his fingers as though we had trapped them. 'That won't do you any good either,' and he wrote once more in his note-book before he allowed us to go.

This was Woodhouse's first brush with motor law, and since I expected no ill consequences to myself, I

pointed out that it was very serious. I took the same view myself when in due time I found that I, too, was summonsed on charges ranging from the use of obscene language to endangering traffic.

Judgment was done in a little pale-yellow market-town with a small, Jubilee clock-tower and a large corn-exchange. Woodhouse drove us there in his car. Pallant, who had not been included in the summons, came with us as moral support. While we waited outside, the fat man on the grey horse rode up and entered into loud talk with his brother magistrates. He said to one of them—for I took the trouble to note it down—‘It falls away from my lodge-gates, dead straight, three-quarters of a mile. I’d defy any one to resist it. We rooked seventy pounds out of ’em last month. No car can resist the temptation. You ought to have one your side the county, Mike. They simply can’t resist it.’

‘Whew!’ said Woodhouse. ‘We’re in for trouble. Don’t you say a word—or Ollyett either! I’ll pay the fines and we’ll get it over as soon as possible. Where’s Pallant?’

‘At the back of the court somewhere,’ said Ollyett. ‘I saw him slip in just now.’

The fat man then took his seat on the Bench, of which he was chairman, and I gathered from a bystander that his name was Sir Thomas Ingell, Bart., M.P., of Ingell Park, Huckley. He began with an allocution pitched in a tone that would have justified revolt throughout empires. Evidence, when the crowded little court did not drown it with applause, was given in the pauses of the address. They were all very proud of their Sir Thomas, and looked from

him to us, wondering why we did not applaud too.

Taking its time from the chairman, the Bench rollicked with us for seventeen minutes. Sir Thomas explained that he was sick and tired of processions of cads of our type, who would be better employed breaking stones on the road than in frightening horses worth more than themselves or their ancestors. This was after it had been proved that Woodhouse's man had turned on the horn purposely to annoy Sir Thomas, who 'happened to be riding by'! There were other remarks too—primitive enough,—but it was the unspeakable brutality of the tone, even more than the quality of the justice, or the laughter of the audience, that stung our souls out of all reason. When we were dismissed—to the tune of twenty-three pounds, twelve shillings and sixpence—we waited for Pallant to join us, while we listened to the next case—one of driving without a licence. Ollyett, with an eye to his evening paper, had already taken very full notes of our own, but we did not wish to seem prejudiced.

'It's all right,' said the reporter of the local paper soothingly. 'We never report Sir Thomas *in extenso*. Only the fines and charges.'

'Oh, thank you,' Ollyett replied, and I heard him ask who every one in court might be. The local reporter was very communicative.

The new victim, a large, flaxen-haired man in somewhat striking clothes, to which Sir Thomas, now thoroughly warmed, drew public attention, said that he had left his licence at home. Sir Thomas asked him if he expected the police to go to his home



address at Jerusalem to find it for him ; and the court roared. Nor did Sir Thomas approve of the man's name, but insisted on calling him ' Mr. Masquerader,' and every time he did so, all his people shouted. Evidently this was their established *auto-da-fé*.

' He didn't summons me—because I'm in the House, I suppose. I think I shall have to ask a Question,' said Pallant, reappearing at the close of the case.

' I think I shall have to give it a little publicity too,' said Woodhouse. ' We can't have this kind of thing going on, you know.' His face was set and quite white. Pallant's, on the other hand, was black, and I know that my very stomach had turned with rage. Ollyett was dumb.

' Well, let's have lunch,' Woodhouse said at last. ' Then we can get away before the show breaks up.'

We drew Ollyett from the arms of the local reporter, crossed the Market Square to the Red Lion and found Sir Thomas's ' Mr. Masquerader ' just sitting down to beer, beef and pickles.

' Ah ! ' said he, in a large voice. ' Companions in misfortune. Won't you gentlemen join me ? '

' Delighted,' said Woodhouse. ' What did you get ? '

' I haven't decided. It might make a good turn, but—the public aren't educated up to it yet. It's beyond 'em. If it wasn't, that red dub on the Bench would be worth fifty a week.'

' Where ? ' said Woodhouse. The man looked at him with unaffected surprise.

' At any one of My places,' he replied. ' But perhaps you live here ? '

'Good heavens !' cried young Ollyett suddenly. 'You *are* Masquerier, then ? I thought you were !'

'Bat Masquerier.' He let the words fall with the weight of an international ultimatum. 'Yes, that's all I am. But you have the advantage of me, gentlemen.'

For the moment, while we were introducing ourselves, I was puzzled. Then I recalled prismatic music-hall posters—of enormous acreage—that had been the unnoticed background of my visits to London for years past. Posters of men and women, singers, jongleurs, impersonators and audacities of every draped and undraped brand, all moved on and off in London and the Provinces by Bat Masquerier—with the long wedge-tailed flourish following the final 'r.'

'I knew you at once,' said Pallant, the trained M.P., and I promptly backed the lie. Woodhouse mumbled excuses. Bat Masquerier was not moved for or against us any more than the frontage of one of his own palaces.

'I always tell My people there's a limit to the size of the lettering,' he said. 'Overdo that and the ret'na doesn't take it in. Advertisin' is the most delicate of all the sciences.'

'There's one man in the world who is going to get a little of it if I live for the next twenty-four hours,' said Woodhouse, and explained how this would come about.

Masquerier stared at him lengthily with gun-metal-blue eyes.

'You mean it ?' he drawled ; the voice was as magnetic as the look.

'I do,' said Ollyett. 'That business of the horn alone ought to have him off the Bench in three months.' Masquerier looked at him even longer than he had looked at Woodhouse.

'He told *me*,' he said suddenly, 'that my home-address was Jerusalem. You heard that?'

'But it was the tone—the tone,' Ollyett cried.

'You noticed that, too, did you?' said Masquerier. 'That's the artistic temperament. You can do a lot with it. And I'm Bat Masquerier,' he went on. He dropped his chin in his fists and scowled straight in front of him. . . . 'I made the Silhouettes—I made the Trefoil and the Jocunda. I made 'Dal Benzaguen.' Here Ollyett sat straight up, for in common with the youth of that year he worshipped Miss Vidal Benzaguen of the Trefoil immensely and unreservedly. "'Is that a dressing-gown or an ulster you're supposed to be wearing?'" You heard *that*? . . . "And I suppose you hadn't time to brush your hair either?" You heard *that*? . . . Now, you hear *me*!' His voice filled the coffee-room, then dropped to a whisper as dreadful as a surgeon's before an operation. He spoke for several minutes. Pallant muttered 'Hear! hear!' I saw Ollyett's eye flash—it was to Ollyett that Masquerier addressed himself chiefly,—and Woodhouse leaned forward with joined hands.

'Are you *with* me?' he went on, gathering us all up in one sweep of the arm. 'When I begin a thing I see it through, gentlemen. What Bat can't break, breaks him! But I haven't struck that thing yet. This is no one-turn turn-it-down show. This is business to the dead finish. Are you with me, gentlemen?'

Good ! Now, we'll pool our assets. One London morning, and one provincial daily, didn't you say ? One weekly commercial ditto and one M.P.'

'Not much use, I'm afraid,' Pallant smirked.

'But privileged. *But* privileged,' he returned. 'And we have also my little team—London, Blackburn, Liverpool, Leeds—I'll tell you about Manchester later—and Me ! Bat Masquerier.' He breathed the name reverently into his tankard. 'Gentlemen, when our combination has finished with Sir Thomas Ingell, Bart., M.P., and everything else that is his, Sodom and Gomorrah will be a winsome bit of Merrie England beside 'em. I must go back to Town now, but I trust you gentlemen will give me the pleasure of your company at dinner to-night at the Chop Suey—the Red Amber Room—and we'll block out the scenario.' He laid his hand on young Ollyett's shoulder and added : 'It's your brains I want.' Then he left, in a good deal of astrakhan collar and nickel-plated limousine, and the place felt less crowded.

We ordered our car a few minutes later. As Woodhouse, Ollyett and I were getting in, Sir Thomas Ingell, Bart., M.P., came out of the Hall of Justice across the square and mounted his horse. I have sometimes thought that if he had gone in silence he might even then have been saved, but as he settled himself in the saddle he caught sight of us and must needs shout : 'Not off yet ? You'd better get away and you'd better be careful.' At that moment Pallant, who had been buying picture-postcards, came out of the inn, took Sir Thomas's eye and very leisurely entered the car. It seemed to me

that for one instant there was a shade of uneasiness on the baronet's grey-whiskered face.

'I hope,' said Woodhouse after several miles, 'I hope he's a widower.'

'Yes,' said Pallant. 'For his poor, dear wife's sake I hope that, very much indeed. I suppose he didn't see me in Court. Oh, here's the parish history of Huckley written by the Rector and here's your share of the picture-postcards. Are we all dining with this Mr. Masquerier to-night?'

'Yes !' said we all.

If Woodhouse knew nothing of journalism, young Ollyett, who had graduated in a hard school, knew a good deal. Our halfpenny evening paper, which we will call *The Bun* to distinguish her from her prosperous morning sister, *The Cake*, was not only diseased but corrupt. We found this out when a man brought us the prospectus of a new oil-field and demanded sub-leaders on its prosperity. Ollyett talked pure Brasenose to him for three minutes. Otherwise he spoke and wrote trade-English—a toothsome amalgam of Americanisms and epigrams. But though the slang changes, the game never alters, and Ollyett and I and, in the end, some others enjoyed it immensely. It was weeks ere we could see the wood for the trees, but so soon as the staff realised that they had proprietors who backed them right or wrong, and specially when they were wrong (which is the sole secret of journalism), and that their fate did not hang on any passing owner's passing mood, they did miracles.

But we did not neglect Huckley. As Ollyett said

our first care was to create an 'arresting atmosphere' round it. He used to visit the village of week-ends, on a motor-bicycle with a side-car ; for which reason I left the actual place alone and dealt with it in the abstract. Yet it was I who drew first blood. Two inhabitants of Huckley wrote to contradict a small, quite solid paragraph in *The Bun* that a hoopoe had been seen at Huckley and had, 'of course, been shot by the local sportsmen.' There was some heat in their letters, both of which we published. Our version of how the hoopoe got his crest from King Solomon was, I grieve to say, so inaccurate that the Rector himself—no sportsman as he pointed out, but a lover of accuracy—wrote to us to correct it. We gave his letter good space and thanked him.

'This priest is going to be useful,' said Ollyett. 'He has the impartial mind. I shall vitalise him.'

Forthwith he created M. L. Sigden, a recluse of refined tastes who in *The Bun* demanded to know whether this Huckley-of-the-Hoopoe was the Hugly of his boyhood and whether, by any chance, the fell change of name had been wrought by collusion between a local magnate and the railway, in the mistaken interests of spurious refinement. 'For I knew it and loved it with the maidens of my day—*eheu ab angulo!*—as Hugly,' wrote M. L. Sigden from Oxford.

Though other papers scoffed, *The Bun* was gravely sympathetic. Several people wrote to deny that Huckley had been changed at birth. Only the Rector—no philosopher as he pointed out, but a lover of accuracy—had his doubts, which he laid publicly before Mr. M. L. Sigden, who suggested,

through *The Bun*, that the little place might have begun life in Anglo-Saxon days as 'Hogslea' or among the Normans as 'Argilé,' on account of its much clay. The Rector had his own ideas too (he said it was mostly gravel), and M. L. Sigden had a fund of reminiscences. Oddly enough—which is seldom the case with free reading-matter—our subscribers rather relished the correspondence, and contemporaries quoted freely.

'The secret of power,' said Ollyett, 'is not the big stick. It's the liftable stick.' (This means the 'arresting' quotation of six or seven lines.) 'Did you see the *Spec.* had a middle on "Rural Tenacities" last week? That was all Huckley. I'm doing a "Mobiquity" on Huckley next week.'

Our 'Mobiquities' were Friday evening accounts of easy motor-bike-*cum*-side-car trips round London, illustrated (we could never get that machine to work properly) by smudgy maps. Ollyett wrote the stuff with a fervour and a delicacy which I always ascribed to the side-car. His account of Epping Forest, for instance, was simply young love with its soul on its lips. But his Huckley 'Mobiquity' would have sickened a soap-boiler. It chemically combined loathsome familiarity, leering suggestion, slimy piety and rancid 'social service' in one fuming compost that fairly lifted me off my feet.

'Yes,' said he, after compliments. 'It's the most vital, arresting and dynamic bit of tump I've done up to date. *Non nobis gloria!* I met Sir Thomas Ingell in his own park. He talked to me again. He inspired most of it.'

'Which? The "glutinous native drawl," or

"the neglected adenoids of the village children"?' I demanded.

'Oh, no! That's only to bring in the panel doctor. It's the last flight we—I'm proudest of.'

This dealt with 'the crepuscular penumbra spreading her dim limbs over the boskage'; with 'jolly rabbits'; with a herd of 'gravid polled Angus'; and with the 'arresting, gipsy-like face of their swart, scholarly owner—as well known at the Royal Agricultural Shows as that of our late King-Emperor.'

'"Swart" is good and so's "gravid,"' said I, 'but the panel doctor will be annoyed about the adenoids.'

'Not half as much as Sir Thomas will about his face,' said Ollyett. 'And if you only knew what I've left out!'

He was right. The panel doctor spent his weekend (this is the advantage of Friday articles) in overwhelming us with a professional counterblast of no interest whatever to our subscribers. We told him so, and he, then and there, battered his way with it into the *Lancet* where they are keen on glands, and forgot us altogether. But Sir Thomas Ingell was of sterner stuff. He must have spent a happy weekend too. The letter which we received from him on Monday proved him to be a kinless loon of upright life, for no woman, however remotely interested in a man, would have let it pass the home wastepaper-basket. He objected to our references to his own herd, to his own labours in his own village, which he said was a Model Village, and to our infernal insolence; but he objected most to our invoice of his features. We wrote him courteously to ask whether the letter was meant for publication. He, remem-



bering, I presume, the Duke of Wellington, wrote back, 'publish and be damned.'

'Oh! This is too easy,' Ollyett said as he began heading the letter.

'Stop a minute,' I said. 'The game is getting a little beyond us. To-night's the Bat dinner.' (I may have forgotten to tell you that our dinner with Bat Masquerier in the Red Amber Room of the Chop Suey had come to be a weekly affair.) 'Hold it over till they've all seen it.'

'Perhaps you're right,' he said. 'You might waste it.'

At dinner, then, Sir Thomas's letter was handed round. Bat seemed to be thinking of other matters, but Pallant was very interested.

'I've got an idea,' he said presently. 'Could you put something into *The Bun* to-morrow about foot-and-mouth disease in that fellow's herd?'

'Oh, plague if you like,' Ollyett replied. 'They're only five measly Shorthorns. I saw one lying down in the park. She'll serve as a substratum of fact.'

'Then, do that; and hold the letter over meanwhile. I think I come in here,' said Pallant.

'Why?' said I.

'Because there's something coming up in the House about foot-and-mouth, and because he wrote me a letter after that little affair when he fined you. 'Took ten days to think it over. Here you are,' said Pallant. 'House of Commons paper, you see.'

We read:

DEAR PALLANT—Although in the past our paths have not lain much together, I am sure you will agree with me that on the floor of the House all members are on a footing of

equality. I make bold, therefore, to approach you in a matter which I think capable of a very different interpretation from that which perhaps was put upon it by your friends. Will you let them know that that was the case and that I was in no way swayed by animus in the exercise of my magisterial duties, which as you, as a brother magistrate, can imagine are frequently very distasteful to—Yours very sincerely,

T. INGELL.

P.S.—I have seen to it that the motor vigilance to which your friends took exception has been considerably relaxed in my district.

‘What did you answer?’ said Ollyett, when all our opinions had been expressed.

‘I told him I couldn’t do anything in the matter. And I couldn’t—then. But you’ll remember to put in that foot-and-mouth paragraph. I want something to work upon.’

‘It seems to me *The Bun* has done all the work up to date,’ I suggested. ‘When does *The Cake* come in?’

‘*The Cake*,’ said Woodhouse, and I remembered afterwards that he spoke like a Cabinet Minister on the eve of a Budget, ‘reserves to itself the fullest right to deal with situations as they arise.’

‘Ye-eh!’ Bat Masquerier shook himself out of his thoughts. ‘“Situations as they arise.” I ain’t idle either. But there’s no use fishing till the swim’s baited. You’—he turned to Ollyett—‘manufacture very good ground-bait. . . . I always tell My people— What the deuce is that?’

There was a burst of song from another private dining-room across the landing. ‘It ees some ladies from the Trefoil,’ the waiter began.

‘Oh, I know that. What are they singing, though?’

He rose and went out, to be greeted by shouts of applause from that merry company. Then there was silence, such as one hears in the form-room after a master’s entry. Then a voice that we all loved began again: ‘Here we go gathering nuts in May—nuts in May—nuts in May!’

‘It’s only ‘Dal—and some nuts,’ he explained when he returned. ‘She says she’s coming in to dessert.’ He sat down, humming the old tune to himself, and till Miss Vidal Benzaguen entered, he held us speechless with tales of the artistic temperament.

We obeyed Pallant to the extent of slipping into *The Bun* a wary paragraph about cows lying down and dripping at the mouth, which might be read either as an unkind libel or, in the hands of a capable lawyer, as a piece of faithful nature-study.

‘And besides,’ said Ollyett, ‘we allude to “gravid polled Angus.” I am advised that no action can lie in respect of virgin Shorthorns. Pallant wants us to come to the House to-night. He’s got us places for the Strangers’ Gallery. I’m beginning to like Pallant.’

‘Masquerier seems to like you,’ I said.

‘Yes, but I’m afraid of him,’ Ollyett answered with perfect sincerity. ‘I am. He’s the Absolutely Amoral Soul. I’ve never met one yet.’

We went to the House together. It happened to be an Irish afternoon, and as soon as I had got the cries and the faces a little sorted out, I gathered there were grievances in the air, but how many of them was beyond me.

'It's all right,' said Ollyett of the trained ear. 'They've shut their ports against—oh, yes—export of Irish cattle! Foot-and-mouth disease at Ballyhession. I see Pallant's idea!'

The House was certainly all mouth for the moment but, as I could feel, quite in earnest. A Minister with a piece of typewritten paper seemed to be fending off volleys of insults. He reminded me somehow of a nervous huntsman breaking up a fox in the face of rabid hounds.

'It's question-time. They're asking questions,' said Ollyett. 'Look! Pallant's up.'

There was no mistaking it. His voice, which his enemies said was his one parliamentary asset, silenced the hubbub as toothache silences mere singing in the ears. He said:

'Arising out of that, may I ask if any special consideration has recently been shown in regard to any suspected outbreak of this disease on *this* side of the Channel?'

He raised his hand; it held a noon edition of *The Bun*. We had thought it best to drop the paragraph out of the later ones. He would have continued, but something in a grey frock-coat roared and bounded on a bench opposite, and waved another *Bun*. It was Sir Thomas Ingell.

'As the owner of the herd so dastardly implicated ——' His voice was drowned in shouts of 'Order!'—the Irish leading.

'What's wrong?' I asked Ollyett. 'He's got his hat on his head, hasn't he?'

'Yes, but his wrath should have been put as a question.'

‘Arising out of that, Mr. Speaker, Sirrr!’ Sir Thomas bellowed through a lull, ‘are you aware that—that all this is a conspiracy—part of a dastardly conspiracy to make Huckley ridiculous—to make *us* ridiculous? Part of a deep-laid plot to make *me* ridiculous, Mr. Speaker, Sir!’

The man’s face showed almost black against his white whiskers, and he struck out swimmingly with his arms. His vehemence puzzled and held the House for an instant, and the Speaker took advantage of it to lift his pack from Ireland to a new scent. He addressed Sir Thomas Ingell in tones of measured rebuke, meant also, I imagine, for the whole House, which lowered its hackles at the word. Then Pallant, shocked and pained: ‘I can only express my profound surprise that in response to my simple question the honourable member should have thought fit to indulge in a personal attack. If I have in any way offended—’

Again the Speaker intervened, for it appeared that he regulated these matters.

He, too, expressed surprise, and Sir Thomas sat back in a hush of reprobation that seemed to have the chill of the centuries behind it. The Empire’s work was resumed.

‘Beautiful!’ said I, and I felt hot and cold up my back.

‘And now we’ll publish his letter,’ said Ollyett.

We did—on the heels of his carefully reported outburst. We made no comment. With that rare instinct for grasping the heart of a situation which is the mark of the Anglo-Saxon, all our contemporaries and, I should say, two-thirds of our corre-

spondents demanded how such a person could be made more ridiculous than he had already proved himself to be. But beyond spelling his name 'Injle,' we alone refused to hit a man when he was down.

'There's no need,' said Ollyett. 'The whole press is on the huckle from end to end.'

Even Woodhouse was a little astonished at the ease with which it had come about, and said as much.

'Rot !' said Ollyett. 'We haven't really begun. Huckley isn't news yet.'

'What do you mean ?' said Woodhouse, who had grown to have great respect for his young but by no means distant connection.

'Mean ? By the grace of God, Master Ridley, I mean to have it so that when Huckley turns over in its sleep, Reuters and the Press Association jump out of bed to cable.' Then he went off at score about certain restorations in Huckley Church which, he said—and he seemed to spend his every week-end there—had been perpetrated by the Rector's predecessor, who had abolished a 'leper-window' or a 'squinch-hole' (whatever these may be) to institute a lavatory in the vestry. It did not strike me as stuff for which Reuters or the Press Association would lose much sleep, and I left him declaiming to Woodhouse about a fourteenth-century font which, he said, he had unearthed in the sexton's tool-shed.

My methods were more on the lines of peaceful penetration. An odd copy, in *The Bun's* rag-and-bone library, of Hone's *Every-day Book* had revealed to me the existence of a village dance founded, like all village dances, on Druidical mysteries connected with the Solar Solstice (which is always un-

challengeable) and Midsummer Morning, which is dewy and refreshing to the London eye. For this I take no credit—Hone being a mine any one can work—but that I rechristened that dance, after I had revised it, ‘The Gubby’ is my title to immortal fame. It was still to be witnessed, I wrote, ‘in all its poignant purity at Huckley, that last home of significant mediæval survivals’; and I fell so in love with my creation that I kept it back for days, enamelling and burnishing.

‘You’d better put it in,’ said Ollyett at last. ‘It’s time we asserted ourselves again. The other fellows are beginning to poach. You saw that thing in the *Pinnacle* about Sir Thomas’s Model Village? He must have got one of their chaps down to do it.’

‘Nothing like the wounds of a friend,’ I said. ‘That account of the non-alcoholic pub alone was——’

‘I liked the bit best about the white-tiled laundry and the Fallen Virgins who wash Sir Thomas’s dress-shirts. Our side couldn’t come within a mile of that, you know. We haven’t the proper flair for sexual slobber.’

‘That’s what I’m always saying,’ I retorted. ‘Leave ’em alone. The other fellows are doing our work for us now. Besides I want to touch up my “Gubby Dance,” a little more.’

‘No. You’ll spoil it. Let’s shove it in to-day. For one thing it’s Literature. I don’t go in for compliments as you know, but, etc. etc.’

I had a healthy suspicion of young Ollyett in every aspect, but though I knew that I should have to pay for it, I fell to his flattery, and my priceless article on

the 'Gubby Dance' appeared. Next Saturday he asked me to bring out *The Bun* in his absence, which I naturally assumed would be connected with the little maroon side-car. I was wrong.

On the following Monday I glanced at *The Cake* at breakfast-time to make sure, as usual, of her inferiority to my beloved but unremunerative *Bun*. I opened on a heading: 'The Village that Voted the Earth was Flat.' I read . . . I read that the Geoplanarian Society—a Society devoted to the proposition that the earth is flat—had held its Annual Banquet and Exercises at Huckley on Saturday, when after convincing addresses, amid scenes of the greatest enthusiasm, Huckley village had decided by an unanimous vote of 438 that the earth was flat. I do not remember that I breathed again till I had finished the two columns of description that followed. Only one man could have written them. They were flawless—crisp, nervous, austere yet human, poignant, vital, arresting—most distinctly arresting—dynamic enough to shift a city—and quotable by whole sticks at a time. And there was a leader, a grave and poised leader, which tore me in two with mirth, until I remembered that I had been left out—infamously and unjustifiably dropped. I went to Ollyett's rooms. He was breakfasting, and, to do him justice, looked conscience-stricken.

'It wasn't my fault,' he began. 'It was Bat Masquerier. I swear I would have asked you to come if——'

'Never mind that,' I said. 'It's the best bit of work you've ever done or will do. Did any of it happen?'



‘Happen ? Heavens ! D’you think even *I* could have invented it ?’

‘Is it exclusive to *The Cake* ?’ I cried.

‘It cost Bat Masquerier two thousand,’ Ollyett replied. ‘D’you think he’d let any one else in on that ? But I give you my sacred word I knew nothing about it till he asked me to come down and cover it. He had Huckley posted in three colours, “The Geoplanarians’ Annual Banquet and Exercises.” Yes, he invented “Geoplanarians.” He wanted Huckley to think it meant aeroplanes. Yes, I know that there is a real Society that thinks the world’s flat—they ought to be grateful for the lift—but Bat made his own. He did ! He created the whole show, I tell you. He swept out half his Halls for the job. Think of that—on a Saturday ! They—we went down in motor char-à-bancs—three of ’em—one pink, one primrose, and one forget-me-not blue—twenty people in each one and “The Earth is Flat” on each side and across the back. I went with Teddy Rickets and Lafone from the Trefoil, and both the Silhouette Sisters, and—wait a minute !—the Crossleigh Trio. You know the Every-Day Dramas Trio at the Jocunda—Ada Crossleigh, “Bunt” Crossleigh, and little Victorine ? Them. And there was Hoke Ramsden, the lightning-change chap in *Morgiana and Drexel*—and there was Billy Turpeen. Yes, you know him ! The North London Star. “I’m the Referee that got himself disliked at Blackheath.” *That* chap ! And there was Mackaye—that one-eyed Scotch fellow that all Glasgow is crazy about. Talk of subordinating yourself for Art’s sake ! Mackaye was the earnest inquirer

who got converted at the end of the meeting. And there was quite a lot of girls I didn't know, and—oh, yes—there was 'Dal ! 'Dal Benzaguen herself ! We sat together, going and coming. She's all the darling there ever was. She sent you her love, and she told me to tell you that she won't forget about Nellie Farren. She says you've given her an ideal to work for. She ? Oh, she was the Lady Secretary to the Geoplanarians, of course. I forget who were in the other brakes—provincial stars mostly—but they played up gorgeously. The art of the music-hall's changed since your day. They didn't overdo it a bit. You see, people who believe the earth is flat don't dress quite like other people. You may have noticed that I hinted at that in my account. It's a rather flat-fronted Ionic style—neo-Victorian, except for the bustles, 'Dal told me,—but 'Dal looked heavenly in it ! So did little Victorine. And there was a girl in the blue brake—she's a provincial—but she's coming to Town this winter and she'll knock 'em—Winnie Deans. Remember that ! She told Huckley how she had suffered for the Cause as a governess in a rich family where they believed that the world is round, and how she threw up her job sooner than teach immoral geography. That was at the overflow meeting outside the Baptist chapel. She knocked 'em to sawdust ! We must look out for Winnie. . . . But Lafone ! Lafone was beyond everything. Impact, personality—conviction—the whole bag o' tricks ! He sweated conviction. Gad, he convinced *me* while he was speaking ! (Him ? He was President of the Geoplanarians, of course. Haven't you read

my account ?) It *is* an infernally plausible theory. After all, no one has actually proved the earth is round, have they ?'

'Never mind the earth. What about Huckley ?'

'Oh, Huckley got tight. That's the worst of these model villages if you let 'em smell fire-water. There's one alcoholic pub in the place that Sir Thomas can't get rid of. Bat made it his base. He sent down the banquet in two motor lorries—dinner for five hundred and drinks for ten thousand. Huckley voted all right. Don't you make any mistake about that. No vote, no dinner. A unanimous vote—exactly as I've said. At least, the Rector and the Doctor were the only dissentients. We didn't count them. Oh yes, Sir Thomas was there. He came and grinned at us through his park gates. He'll grin worse to-day. There's an aniline dye that you rub through a stencil-plate that eats about a foot into any stone and wears good to the last. Bat had both the lodge-gates stencilled "*The Earth is flat!*" and all the barns and walls they could get at. . . . Oh Lord, but Huckley was drunk! We had to fill 'em up to make 'em forgive us for not being aeroplanes. Unthankful yokels! D'you realise that Emperors couldn't have commanded the talent Bat decanted on 'em? Why, 'Dal alone was. . . . And by eight o'clock not even a bit of paper left! The whole show packed up and gone, and Huckley hoo-aying for the earth being flat.'

'Very good,' I began. 'I am, as you know, a one-third proprietor of *The Bun*.'

'I didn't forget that,' Ollyett interrupted. 'That

was uppermost in my mind all the time. I've got a special account for *The Bun* to-day—it's an idyll—and just to show how I thought of you, I told 'Dal, coming home, about your Gubby Dance, and she told Winnie. Winnie came back in our char-à-banc. After a bit we had to get out and dance it in a field. It's quite a dance the way we did it—and Lafone invented a sort of gorilla lockstep procession at the end. Bat had sent down a film-chap on the chance of getting something. He was the son of a clergyman—a most dynamic personality. He said there isn't anything for the cinema in meetings *qua* meetings—they lack action. Films are a branch of art by themselves. But he went wild over the Gubby. He said it was like Peter's vision at Joppa. He took about a million feet of it. Then I photoed it exclusive for *The Bun*. I've sent 'em in already, only remember we must eliminate Winnie's left leg in the first figure. It's too arresting. . . . And there you are ! But I tell you I'm afraid of Bat. That man's the Personal Devil. He did it all. He didn't even come down himself. He said he'd distract his people.'

'Why didn't he ask me to come ?' I persisted.

'Because he said you'd distract me. He said he wanted my brains on ice. He got 'em. I believe it's the best thing I've ever done.' He reached for *The Cake* and re-read it luxuriously. 'Yes, out and away the best—supremely quotable,' he concluded, and—after another survey—'By God, what a genius I was yesterday !'

I would have been angry, but I had not the time. That morning, Press agencies grovelled to me in *The*

*Bun* office for leave to use certain photos, which, they understood, I controlled, of a certain village dance. When I had sent the fifth man away on the edge of tears, my self-respect came back a little. Then there was *The Bun's* poster to get out. Art being elimination, I fined it down to two words (one too many, as it proved)—‘The Gubby!’ in red, at which our manager protested; but by five o'clock he told me that I was *the* Napoleon of Fleet Street. Ollyett's account in *The Bun* of the Geoplanarians' Exercises and Love Feast lacked the supreme shock of his version in *The Cake*, but it bruised more; while the photos of ‘The Gubby’ (which, with Winnie's left leg, was why I had set the doubtful press to work so early) were beyond praise and, next day, beyond price. But even then I did not understand.

A week later, I think it was, Bat Masquerier telephoned to me to come to the Trefoil.

‘It's your turn now,’ he said. ‘I'm not asking Ollyett. Come to the stage-box.’

I went, and, as Bat's guest, was received as Royalty is not. We sat well back and looked out on the packed thousands. It was *Morgiana and Drexel*, that fluid and electric revue which Bat—though he gave Lafone the credit—really created.

‘Ye-es,’ said Bat dreamily, after *Morgiana* had given ‘the nasty jar’ to the Forty Thieves in their forty oil ‘combinations.’ ‘As you say, I've got 'em and I can hold 'em. What a man does doesn't matter much; and how he does it don't matter either. It's the *when*—the psychological moment. 'Press can't make up for it; money can't; brains

can't. A lot's luck, but all the rest is genius. I'm not speaking about My people now. I'm talking of Myself.'

Then 'Dal—she was the only one who dared—knocked at the door and stood behind us all alive and panting as Morgiana. Lafone was carrying the police-court scene, and the house was ripped up crossways with laughter.

'Ah! Tell a fellow now,' she asked me for the twentieth time, 'did you love Nellie Farren when you were young?'

'Did we love her?' I answered. '"If the earth and the sky and the sea"—There were three million of us, 'Dal, and we worshipped her.'

'How did she get it across?' 'Dal went on.

'She was Nellie. The houses used to coo over her when she came on.'

'I've had a good deal, but I've never been cooed over yet,' said 'Dal wistfully.

'It isn't the how, it's the when,' Bat repeated. 'Ah!'

He leaned forward as the house began to rock and peal full-throatedly. 'Dal fled. A sinuous and silent procession was filing into the police-court to a scarcely audible accompaniment. It was dressed—but the world and all its picture-palaces know how it was dressed. It danced and it danced, and it danced the dance which bit all humanity in the leg for half a year, and it wound up with the lockstep finale that mowed the house down in swathes, sobbing and aching. Somebody in the gallery moaned, 'Oh Gord, the Gubby!' and we heard the word run like a shudder, for they had not a full breath left among

them. Then 'Dal came on, an electric star in her dark hair, the diamonds flashing in her three-inch heels—a vision that made no sign for thirty counted seconds while the police-court scene dissolved behind her into Morgiana's Manicure Palace, and they recovered themselves. The star on her forehead went out, and a soft light bathed her as she took—slowly, slowly to the croon of adoring strings—the eighteen paces forward. We saw her first as a queen alone ; next as a queen for the first time conscious of her subjects, and at the end, when her hands fluttered, as a woman delighted, awed not a little, but transfigured and illuminated with sheer, compelling affection and goodwill. I caught the broken mutter of welcome—the coo which is more than tornadoes of applause. It died and rose and died again lovingly.

'She's got it across,' Bat whispered. 'I've never seen her like this. I told her to light up the star, but I was wrong, and she knew it. She's an artist.'

'Dal, you darling !' some one spoke, not loudly but it carried through the house.

'Thank *you* !' Dal answered, and in that broken tone one heard the last fetter riveted. 'Good evening, boys ! I've just come from—now—where the dooce was it I *have* come from ?' She turned to the impassive files of the Gubby dancers, and went on : 'Ah, so good of you to remind me, you dear, bun-faced things. I've just come from the village—The Village that Voted the Earth was Flat.'

She swept into that song with the full orchestra. It devastated the habitable earth for the next six months. Imagine, then, what its rage and pulse

must have been at the incandescent hour of its birth ! She only gave the chorus once. At the end of the second verse, 'Are you *with* me, boys ?' she cried, and the house tore it clean away from her—'Earth was flat—Earth was flat. Flat as my hat—Flatter than that'—drowning all but the bassoons and double-basses that marked the word.

'Wonderful,' I said to Bat. 'And it's only "Nuts in May" with variations.'

'Yes—but *I* did the variations,' he replied.

At the last verse she gestured to Carlini the conductor, who threw her up his baton. She caught it with a boy's ease. 'Are you *with* me ?' she cried once more, and—the maddened house behind her—abolished all the instruments except the guttural belch of the double-basses on 'Earth'—'The Village that voted the *Earth* was flat—Earth was flat !' It was delirium. Then she picked up the Gubby dancers and led them in a clattering improvised lockstep thrice round the stage till her last kick sent her diamond-hilted shoe catherine-wheeling to the electrolier.

I saw the forest of hands raised to catch it, heard the roaring and stamping pass through hurricanes to full typhoon ; heard the song, pinned down by the faithful double-basses as the bull-dog pins down the bellowing bull, overbear even those ; till at last the curtain fell and Bat took me round to her dressing-room, where she lay spent after her seventh call. Still the song, through all those white-washed walls, shook the reinforced concrete of the Trefoil as steam pile-drivers shake the flanks of a dock.

'I'm all out—first time in my life. Ah ! Tell a



fellow now, did I get it across?' she whispered huskily.

'You know you did,' I replied as she dipped her nose deep in a beaker of barley-water. 'They cooed over you.'

Bat nodded. 'And poor Nellie's dead—in Africa, ain't it?'

'I hope I'll die before they stop cooing,' said 'Dal.

'"*Earth* was flat—*Earth* was flat!"' Now it was more like mine-pumps in flood.

'They'll have the house down if you don't take another,' some one called.

'Bless 'em!' said 'Dal, and went out for her eighth, when in the face of that cataract she said yawning, 'I don't know how *you* feel, children, but *I'm* dead. You be quiet.'

'Hold a minute,' said Bat to me. 'I've got to hear how it went in the provinces. Winnie Deans had it in Manchester, and Ramsden at Glasgow—and there are all the films too. I had rather a heavy week-end.'

The telephones presently reassured him.

'It'll do,' said he. 'And *he* said my home address was Jerusalem.' He left me humming the refrain of 'The Holy City.' Like Ollyett I found myself afraid of that man.

When I got out into the street and met the disgorging picture-palaces capering on the pavements and humming it (for he had put the gramophones on with the films), and when I saw far to the south the red electrics flash 'Gubby' across the Thames, I feared more than ever.

. . . . .

A few days passed which were like nothing except, perhaps, a suspense of fever in which the sick man perceives the searchlights of the world's assembled navies in act to converge on one minute fragment of wreckage—one only in all the black and agony-strewn sea. Then those beams focussed themselves. Earth as we knew it—the full circuit of our orb—laid the weight of its impersonal and searing curiosity on this Huckley which had voted that it was flat. It asked for news about Huckley—where and what it might be, and how it talked—it knew how it danced—and how it thought in its wonderful soul. And then, in all the zealous, merciless Press, Huckley was laid out for it to look at, as a drop of pond water is exposed on the sheet of a magic-lantern show. But Huckley's sheet was only coterminous with the use of type among mankind. For the precise moment that was necessary, Fate ruled it that there should be nothing of first importance in the world's idle eye. One atrocious murder, a political crisis, an incautious or heady continental statesman, the mere catarrh of a king, would have wiped out the significance of our message, as a passing cloud annuls the urgent helio. But it was halcyon weather in every respect. Ollyett and I did not need to lift our little fingers any more than the Alpine climber whose last sentence has unkeyed the arch of the avalanche. The thing roared and pulverised and swept beyond eyesight all by itself—all by itself. And once well away, the fall of kingdoms could not have diverted it.

Ours is, after all, a kindly earth. While The Song ran and raped it with the cataleptic kick of 'Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay,' multiplied by the West African

significance of 'Everybody's doing it,' plus twice the infernal elementality of a certain tune in *Dona et Gamma*; when for all practical purposes, literary, dramatic, artistic, social, municipal, political, commercial, and administrative, the Earth *was* flat, the Rector of Huckley wrote to us—again as a lover of accuracy—to point out that the Huckley vote on 'the alleged flatness of this scene of our labours here below' was *not* unanimous; he and the doctor having voted against it. And the great Baron Reuter himself (I am sure it could have been none other) flashed that letter in full to the front, back, and both wings of this scene of our labours. For Huckley was News. *The Bun* also contributed a photograph which cost me some trouble to fake.

'We are a vital nation,' said Ollyett while we were discussing affairs at a Bat dinner. 'Only an Englishman could have written that letter at this present juncture.'

'It reminded me of a tourist in the Cave of the Winds under Niagara. Just one figure in a mackintosh. But perhaps you saw our photo?' I said proudly.

'Yes,' Bat replied. 'I've been to Niagara, too. And how's Huckley taking it?'

'They don't quite understand, of course,' said Ollyett. 'But it's bringing pots of money into the place. Ever since the motor-bus excursions were started——'

'I didn't know they had been,' said Pallant.

'Oh yes. Motor char-à-bancs—uniformed guides and key-bugles included. They're getting a bit fed up with the tune there nowadays,' Ollyett added.

'They play it under his windows, don't they?' Bat asked. 'He can't stop the right of way across his park.'

'He cannot,' Ollyett answered. 'By the way, Woodhouse, I've bought that font for you from the sexton. I paid fifteen pounds for it.'

'What am I supposed to do with it?' asked Woodhouse.

'You give it to the Victoria and Albert Museum. It is fourteenth-century work all right. You can trust me.'

'Is it worth it—now?' said Pallant. 'Not that I'm weakening, but merely as a matter of tactics?'

'But this is true,' said Ollyett. 'Besides, it is my hobby, I always wanted to be an architect. I'll attend to it myself. It's too serious for *The Bun* and miles too good for *The Cake*.'

He broke ground in a ponderous architectural weekly, which had never heard of Huckley. There was no passion in his statement, but mere fact backed by a wide range of authorities. He established beyond doubt that the old font at Huckley had been thrown out, on Sir Thomas's instigation, twenty years ago, to make room for a new one of Bath stone adorned with Limoges enamels; and that it had lain ever since in a corner of the sexton's shed. He proved, with learned men to support him, that there was only one other font in all England to compare with it. So Woodhouse bought it and presented it to a grateful South Kensington which said it would see the earth still flatter before it returned the treasure to purblind Huckley. Bishops by the benchful and most of the Royal Academy, not to mention

'Margaritas ante Porcos,' wrote fervently to the papers. *Punch* based a political cartoon on it; *The Times* a third leader, 'The Lust of Newness'; and the *Spectator* a scholarly and delightful middle, 'Village Hausmania.' The vast amused outside world said in all its tongues and types: 'Of course! This is just what Huckley would do!' And neither Sir Thomas nor the Rector nor the sexton nor any one else wrote to deny it.

'You see,' said Ollyett, 'this is much more of a blow to Huckley than it looks—because every word of it's true. Your Gubby dance was inspiration, I admit, but it hadn't its roots in——'

'Two hemispheres and four continents so far,' I pointed out.

'Its roots in the hearts of Huckley was what I was going to say. Why don't you ever come down and look at the place? You've never seen it since we were stopped there.'

'I've only my week-ends free,' I said, 'and you seem to spend yours there pretty regularly—with the side-car. I was afraid——'

'Oh, *that's* all right,' he said cheerily. 'We're quite an old engaged couple now. As a matter of fact, it happened after "the gravid polled Angus" business. Come along this Saturday. Woodhouse says he'll run us down after lunch. He wants to see Huckley too.'

Pallant could not accompany us, but Bat took his place.

'It's odd,' said Bat, 'that none of us except Ollyett has ever set eyes on Huckley since that time. That's what I always tell My people. Local colour

is all right *after* you've got your idea. Before that it's a mere nuisance.' He regaled us on the way down with panoramic views of the success—geographical and financial—of 'The Gubby' and The Song.

'By the way,' said he, 'I've assigned 'Dal all the gramophone rights of "The Earth." She's a born artist. 'Hadn't sense enough to hit me for triple-dubs the morning after. She'd have taken it out in coos.'

'Bless her ! And what'll she make out of the gramophone rights ?' I asked.

'Lord knows!' he replied. 'I've made fifty-four thousand my little end of the business, and it's only just beginning. Hear *that* !'

A shell-pink motor-brake roared up behind us to the music on a key-bugle of 'The Village that Voted The Earth was Flat.' In a few minutes we overtook another, in natural wood, whose occupants were singing it through their noses.

'I don't know that agency. It must be Cook's,' said Ollyett. 'They *do* suffer.' We were never out of ear-shot of the tune the rest of the way to Huckley.

Though I knew it would be so, I was disappointed with the actual aspect of the spot we had—it is not too much to say—created in the face of the nations. The alcoholic pub ; the village green ; the Baptist chapel ; the church ; the sexton's shed ; the Rectory whence the so-wonderful letters had come ; Sir Thomas's park gate-pillars still violently declaring 'The Earth *is* flat,' were as mean, as average, as ordinary as the photograph of a room where a murder has been committed. Ollyett, who, of course, knew

the place specially well, made the most of it to us. Bat, who had employed it as a back-cloth to one of his own dramas, dismissed it as a thing used and emptied, but Woodhouse expressed my feelings when he said: 'Is that all—after all we've done?'

'I know,' said Ollyett soothingly. '"Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing: When Ilion like a mist rose into towers." I've felt the same sometimes, though it has been Paradise for me. But they *do* suffer.'

The fourth brake in thirty minutes had just turned into Sir Thomas's park to tell the Hall that 'The *Earth* was flat'; a knot of obviously American tourists were kodaking his lodge gates; while the tea-shop opposite the lych-gate was full of people buying postcards of the old font as it had lain twenty years in the sexton's shed. We went to the alcoholic pub and congratulated the proprietor.

'It's bringin' money to the place,' said he. 'But in a sense you can buy money too dear. It isn't doin' us any good. People are laughin' at us. That's what they're doin'. . . . Now, with regard to that Vote of ours you may have heard talk about. . . .'

'For Gorze sake, chuck that votin' business,' cried an elderly man at the door. 'Money-gettin' or no money-gettin', we're fed up with it.'

'Well, I do think,' said the publican, shifting his ground, 'I do think Sir Thomas might ha' managed better in some things.'

'He tole me,'—the elderly man shouldered his way to the bar—'he tole me twenty years ago to take an' lay that font in my tool-shed. He *tole* me so himself. An' now, after twenty years, me own wife

makin' me out little better than the common 'ang-man !'

'That's the sexton,' the publican explained. 'His good lady sells the postcards—if you 'aven't got some. But we feel Sir Thomas might ha' done better.'

'What's he got to do with it?' said Woodhouse.

'There's nothin' we can trace 'ome to 'im in so many words, but we think he might 'ave saved us the font business. Now, in regard to that votin' business——'

'Chuck it ! Oh, chuck it !' the sexton roared, 'or you'll 'ave me cuttin' my throat at cock-crow. 'Ere's another parcel of fun-makers !'

A motor-brake had pulled up at the door and a multitude of men and women immediately descended. We went out to look. They bore rolled banners, a reading-desk in three pieces, and, I specially noticed, a collapsible harmonium, such as is used on ships at sea.

'Salvation Army !' I said, though I saw no uniforms.

Two of them unfurled a banner between poles which bore the legend: 'The Earth *is* flat.' Woodhouse and I turned to Bat. He shook his head. 'No, no ! Not me. . . . If I had only seen their costumes in advance !'

'Good Lord !' said Ollyett. 'It's the genuine Society !'

The company advanced on the green with the precision of people well broke to these movements. Scene-shifters could not have been quicker with the three-piece rostrum, nor stewards with the harmonium. Almost before its cross-legs had been kicked into their catches, certainly before the tourists



by the lodge-gates had begun to move over, a woman sat down to it and struck up a hymn:

‘Hear ther truth our tongues are telling,  
Spread ther light from shore to shore,  
God hath given man a dwelling  
Flat and flat for evermore.

‘When ther Primal Dark retreated,  
When ther deeps were undesigned,  
He with rule and level meted  
Habitation for mankind !’

I saw sick envy on Bat’s face. ‘Curse Nature,’ he muttered. ‘She gets ahead of you every time. To think *I* forgot hymns and a harmonium !’

Then came the chorus :

‘Hear ther truth our tongues are telling,  
Spread ther light from shore to shore—  
Oh, be faithful ! Oh, be truthful !  
Earth is flat for evermore.’

They sang several verses with the fervour of Christians awaiting their lions. Then there were growlings in the air. The sexton, embraced by the landlord, two-stepped out of the pub-door. Each was trying to outroar the other. ‘Apologising in advance for what he says,’ the landlord shouted : ‘You’d better go away’ (here the sexton began to speak words). ‘This isn’t the time nor yet the place for—for any more o’ this chat.’

The crowd thickened. I saw the village police-sergeant come out of his cottage buckling his belt.

‘But surely,’ said the woman at the harmonium, ‘there must be some mistake. We are not suffragettes.’

‘Damn it ! They’d be a change,’ cried the sexton. ‘You get out of this ! Don’t talk ! *I* can’t stand it for one ! Get right out, or we’ll font you !’

The crowd which was being recruited from every house in sight echoed the invitation. The sergeant pushed forward. A man beside the reading-desk said : ‘But surely we are among dear friends and sympathisers. Listen to me for a moment.’

It was the moment that a passing char-à-banc chose to strike into The Song. The effect was instantaneous. Bat, Ollyett, and I, who by divers roads have learned the psychology of crowds, retreated towards the tavern door. Woodhouse, the newspaper proprietor, anxious, I presume, to keep touch with the public, dived into the thick of it. Every one else told the Society to go away at once. When the lady at the harmonium (I began to understand why it is sometimes necessary to kill women) pointed at the stencilled park pillars and called them ‘the cromlechs of our common faith,’ there was a snarl and a rush. The police-sergeant checked it, but advised the Society to keep on going. The Society withdrew into the brake fighting, as it were, a rearguard action of oratory up each step. The collapsed harmonium was hauled in last, and with the perfect unreason of crowds, they cheered it loudly, till the chauffeur slipped in his clutch and sped away. Then the crowd broke up, congratulating all concerned except the sexton, who was held to have disgraced his office by having sworn at ladies. We strolled across the green towards Woodhouse, who was talking to the police-sergeant near the park-gates. We were not twenty yards from him when we saw

Sir Thomas Ingell emerge from the lodge and rush furiously at Woodhouse with an uplifted stick, at the same time shrieking : ' I'll teach you to laugh, you —— ' but Ollyett has the record of the language. By the time we reached them, Sir Thomas was on the ground ; Woodhouse, very white, held the walking-stick and was saying to the sergeant :

' I give this person in charge for assault.'

' But, good Lord ! ' said the sergeant, whiter than Woodhouse. ' It's Sir Thomas.'

' Whoever it is, it isn't fit to be at large,' said Woodhouse. The crowd suspecting something wrong began to reassemble, and all the English horror of a row in public moved us, headed by the sergeant, inside the lodge. We shut both park-gates and lodge-door.

' You saw the assault, sergeant,' Woodhouse went on. ' You can testify I used no more force than was necessary to protect myself. You can testify that I have not even damaged this person's property. (Here ! take your stick, you ! ) You heard the filthy language he used.'

' I—I can't say I did,' the sergeant stammered.

' Oh, but *we* did ! ' said Ollyett, and repeated it, to the apron-veiled horror of the lodge-keeper's wife.

Sir Thomas on a hard kitchen chair began to talk. He said he had ' stood enough of being photographed like a wild beast,' and expressed loud regret that he had not killed ' that man,' who was ' conspiring with the sergeant to laugh at him.'

' Ad you ever seen 'im before, Sir Thomas ? ' the sergeant asked.

'No ! But it's time an example was made here. I've never seen the sweep in my life.'

I think it was Bat Masquerier's magnetic eye that recalled the past to him, for his face changed and his jaw dropped. 'But I have !' he groaned. 'I remember now.'

Here a writhing man entered by the back door. He was, he said, the village solicitor. I do not assert that he licked Woodhouse's boots, but we should have respected him more if he had and been done with it. His notion was that the matter could be accommodated, arranged and compromised for gold, and yet more gold. The sergeant thought so too. Woodhouse undeceived them both. To the sergeant he said, 'Will you or will you not enter the charge ?' To the village solicitor he gave the name of his lawyers, at which the man wrung his hands and cried, 'Oh, Sir T., Sir T. !' in a miserable falsetto, for it was a Bat Masquerier of a firm. They conferred together in tragic whispers.

'I don't dive after Dickens,' said Ollyett to Bat and me by the window, 'but every time *I* get into a row I notice the police-court always fills up with his characters.'

'I've noticed that too,' said Bat. 'But the odd thing is you mustn't give the public straight Dickens—not in My business. I wonder why that is.'

Then Sir Thomas got his second wind and cursed the day that he, or it may have been we, were born. I feared that though he was a Radical he might apologise and, since he was an M.P., might lie his way out of the difficulty. But he was utterly and truthfully beside himself. He asked foolish ques-

tions—such as what we were doing in the village at all, and how much blackmail Woodhouse expected to make out of him. But neither Woodhouse nor the sergeant nor the writhing solicitor listened. The upshot of their talk, in the chimney-corner, was that Sir Thomas stood engaged to appear next Monday before his brother magistrates on charges of assault, disorderly conduct, and language calculated, etc. Ollyett was specially careful about the language.

Then we left. The village looked very pretty in the late light—pretty and tuneful as a nest of nightingales.

‘You’ll turn up on Monday, I hope,’ said Woodhouse, when we reached Town. That was his only allusion to the affair.

So we turned up—through a world still singing that the Earth was flat—at the little clay-coloured market-town with the large Corn Exchange and the small Jubilee memorial. We had some difficulty in getting seats in the court. Woodhouse’s imported London lawyer was a man of commanding personality, with a voice trained to convey blasting imputations by tone. When the case was called, he rose and stated his client’s intention not to proceed with the charge. His client, he went on to say, had not entertained, and, of course, in the circumstances could not have entertained, any suggestion of accepting on behalf of public charities any moneys that might have been offered to him on the part of Sir Thomas’s estate. At the same time, no one acknowledged more sincerely than his client the spirit in which those offers had been made by those entitled to make them. But, as a matter of fact—here he

became the man of the world colloquing with his equals—certain—er—details had come to his client's knowledge *since* the lamentable outburst, which . . . He shrugged his shoulders. Nothing was served by going into them, but he ventured to say that, had those painful circumstances only been known earlier, his client would—again 'of course'—never have dreamed— A gesture concluded the sentence, and the ensnared Bench looked at Sir Thomas with new and withdrawing eyes. Frankly, as they could see, it would be nothing less than cruelty to proceed further with this—er—unfortunate affair. He asked leave, therefore, to withdraw the charge *in toto*, and at the same time to express his client's deepest sympathy with all who had been in any way distressed, as his client had been, by the fact and the publicity of proceedings which he could, of course, again assure them that his client would never have dreamed of instituting if, as he hoped he had made plain, certain facts had been before his client at the time when . . . But he had said enough. For his fee it seemed to me that he had.

Heaven inspired Sir Thomas's lawyer—all of a sweat lest his client's language should come out—to rise up and thank him. Then, Sir Thomas—not yet aware what leprosy had been laid upon him, but grateful to escape on any terms—followed suit. He was heard in interested silence, and people drew back a pace as Gehazi passed forth.

'You hit hard,' said Bat to Woodhouse afterwards. 'His own people think he's mad.'

'You don't say so? I'll show you some of his letters to-night at dinner,' he replied.

He brought them to the Red Amber Room of the Chop Suey. We forgot to be amazed, as till then we had been amazed, over The Song or 'The Gubby,' or the full tide of Fate that seemed to run only for our sakes. It did not even interest Ollyett that the verb 'to huckle' had passed into the English leader-writers' language. We were studying the interior of a soul, flash-lighted to its grimiest corners by the dread of 'losing its position.'

'And then it thanked you, didn't it, for dropping the case?' said Pallant.

'Yes, and it sent me a telegram to confirm.' Woodhouse turned to Bat. 'Now d'you think I hit too hard?' he asked.

'No—o!' said Bat. 'After all—I'm talking of every one's business now—one can't ever do anything in Art that comes up to Nature in any game in life. Just think how this thing has——'

'Just let me run through that little case of yours again,' said Pallant, and picked up *The Bun* which had it set out in full.

'Any chance of 'Dal looking in on us to-night?' Ollyett began.

'She's occupied with her Art too,' Bat answered bitterly. 'What's the use of Art? Tell me, some one!' A barrel-organ outside promptly pointed out that the *Earth* was flat. 'The gramophone's killing street organs, but I let loose a hundred and seventy-four of those hurdy gurdys twelve hours after The Song,' said Bat. 'Not counting the Provinces.' His face brightened a little.

'Look here!' said Pallant over the paper. 'I don't suppose you or those asinine J.P.'s knew it—

but your lawyer ought to have known that you've all put your foot in it most confoundedly over this assault case.'

'What's the matter?' said Woodhouse.

'It's ludicrous. It's insane. There isn't two penn'orth of legality in the whole thing. Of course, you could have withdrawn the charge, but the way you went about it is childish—besides being illegal. What on earth was the Chief Constable thinking of?'

'Oh, he was a friend of Sir Thomas's. They all were for that matter,' I replied.

'He ought to be hanged. So ought the Chairman of the Bench. I'm talking as a lawyer now.'

'Why, what have we been guilty of? Misprision of treason or compounding a felony—or what?' said Ollyett.

'I'll tell you later.' Pallant went back to the paper with knitted brows, smiling unpleasantly from time to time. At last he laughed.

'Thank you!' he said to Woodhouse. 'It ought to be pretty useful—for us.'

'What d'you mean?' said Ollyett.

'For our side. They are all Rads who are mixed up in this—from the Chief Constable down. There must be a Question. There must be a Question.'

'Yes, but I wanted the charge withdrawn in my own way,' Woodhouse insisted.

'That's nothing to do with the case. It's the legality of your silly methods. You wouldn't understand if I talked till morning.' He began to pace the room, his hands behind him. 'I wonder if I can get it through our Whip's thick head that it's a



chance. . . . That comes of stuffing the Bench with Radical tinkers,' he muttered.

'Oh, sit down !' said Woodhouse.

'Where's your lawyer to be found now ?' he jerked out.

'At the Trefoil,' said Bat promptly. 'I gave him the stage-box for to-night. He's an artist too.'

'Then I'm going to see him,' said Pallant. 'Properly handled this ought to be a godsend for our side.' He withdrew without apology.

'Certainly, this thing keeps on opening up, and up,' I remarked inanely.

'It's beyond me !' said Bat. 'I don't think if I'd known I'd have ever . . . Yes, I would, though. He said my home address was——'

'It was his tone—his tone !' Ollyett almost shouted. Woodhouse said nothing, but his face whitened as he brooded.

'Well, any way,' Bat went on, 'I'm glad I always believed in God and Providence and all those things. Else I should lose my nerve. We've put it over the whole world—the full extent of the geographical globe. We couldn't stop it if we wanted to now. It's got to burn itself out. I'm not in charge any more. What d'you expect'll happen next. Angels?'

I expected nothing. Nothing that I expected approached what I got. Politics are not my concern, but, for the moment, since it seemed that they were going to 'huckle' with the rest, I took an interest in them. They impressed me as a dog's life without a dog's decencies, and I was confirmed in this when an unshaven and unwashed Pallant called

on me at ten o'clock one morning, begging for a bath and a couch.

'Bail too?' I asked. He was in evening dress and his eyes were sunk feet in his head.

'No,' he said hoarsely. 'All night sitting. Fifteen divisions. 'Nother to-night. Your place was nearer than mine, so——' He began to undress in the hall.

When he awoke at one o'clock he gave me lurid accounts of what he said was history, but which was obviously collective hysteria. There had been a political crisis. He and his fellow M.P.'s had 'done things'—I never quite got at the things—for eighteen hours on end, and the pitiless Whips were even then at the telephones to herd 'em up to another dog-fight. So he snorted and grew hot all over again while he might have been resting.

'I'm going to pitch in my question about that miscarriage of justice at Huckley this afternoon, if you care to listen to it,' he said. 'It'll be absolutely thrown away—in our present state. I told 'em so; but it's my only chance for weeks. P'raps Woodhouse would like to come.'

'I'm sure he would. Anything to do with Huckley interests us,' I said.

'It'll miss fire, I'm afraid. Both sides are absolutely cooked. The present situation has been working up for some time. You see the row was bound to come, etc. etc.,' and he flew off the handle once more.

I telephoned to Woodhouse, and we went to the House together. It was a dull, sticky afternoon with thunder in the air. For some reason or other, each side was determined to prove its virtue and

endurance to the utmost. I heard men snarling about it all round me. 'If they won't spare us, we'll show 'em no mercy.' 'Break the brutes up from the start. They can't stand late hours.' 'Come on! No shirking! I know *you've* had a Turkish bath,' were some of the sentences I caught on our way. The House was packed already, and one could feel the negative electricity of a jaded crowd wrenching at one's own nerves, and depressing the afternoon soul.

'This is bad!' Woodhouse whispered. 'There'll be a row before they've finished. Look at the Front Benches!' And he pointed out little personal signs by which I was to know that each man was on edge. He might have spared himself. The House was ready to snap before a bone had been thrown. A sullen Minister rose to reply to a staccato question. His supporters cheered defiantly. 'None o' that! None o' that!' came from the Back Benches. I saw the Speaker's face stiffen like the face of a helmsman as he humours a hard-mouthed yacht after a sudden following sea. The trouble was barely met in time. There came a fresh, apparently causeless gust a few minutes later—savage, threatening, but futile. It died out—one could hear the sigh—in sudden wrathful realisation of the dreary hours ahead, and the ship of state drifted on.

Then Pallant—and the raw House winced at the torture of his voice—rose. It was a twenty-line question, studded with legal technicalities. The gist of it was that he wished to know whether the appropriate Minister was aware that there had been a grave miscarriage of justice on such and such a date,

at such and such a place, before such and such justices of the peace, in regard to a case which arose——

I heard one desperate, weary ‘damn!’ float up from the pit of that torment. Pallant sawed on——‘out of certain events which occurred at the village of Huckley.’

The House came to attention with a parting of the lips like a hiccough, and it flashed through my mind. . . . Pallant repeated, ‘Huckley. The village——’

‘That voted the *Earth* was flat.’ A single voice from a back Bench sang it once like a lone frog in a far pool.

‘*Earth* was flat,’ croaked another voice opposite.

‘*Earth* was flat.’ There were several. Then several more.

It was, you understand, the collective, overstrained nerve of the House, snapping, strand by strand to various notes, as the hawser parts from its moorings.

‘The Village that voted the *Earth* was flat.’ The tune was beginning to shape itself. More voices were raised and feet began to beat time. Even so it did not occur to me that the thing would——

‘The Village that voted the *Earth* was flat!’ It was easier now to see who were not singing. There were still a few. Of a sudden (and this proves the fundamental instability of the cross-bench mind) a cross-bencher leaped on his seat and there played an imaginary double-bass with tremendous maestro-like waggings of the elbow.

The last strand parted. The ship of state drifted out helpless on the rocking tide of melody.

‘ The Village that voted the *Earth* was flat !  
The Village that voted the *Earth* was flat ! ’

The Irish first conceived the idea of using their order-papers as funnels wherewith to reach the correct ‘ *vroom—vroom* ’ on ‘ *Earth*. ’ Labour, always conservative and respectable at a crisis, stood out longer than any other section, but when it came in it was howling syndicalism. Then, without distinction of Party, fear of constituents, desire for office, or hope of emolument, the House sang at the tops and at the bottoms of their voices, swaying their stale bodies and epileptically beating with their swelled feet. They sang ‘ The Village that voted the *Earth* was flat ’ : first, because they wanted to, and secondly—which is the terror of that song—because they could not stop. For no consideration could they stop.

Pallant was still standing up. Some one pointed at him and they laughed. Others began to point, lunging, as it were, in time with the tune. At this moment two persons came in practically abreast from behind the Speaker’s chair, and halted appalled. One happened to be the Prime Minister and the other a messenger. The House, with tears running down their cheeks, transferred their attention to the paralysed couple. They pointed six hundred fore-fingers at them. They rocked, they waved, and they rolled while they pointed, but still they sang. When they weakened for an instant, Ireland would yell : ‘ Are ye *with* me, bhoys ? ’ and they all renewed their strength like Antæus. No man could say afterwards what happened in the Press or the Strangers’

Gallery. It was the House, the hysterical and abandoned House of Commons that held all eyes, as it deafened all ears. I saw both Front Benches bend forward, some with their foreheads on their despatch-boxes, the rest with their faces in their hands ; and their moving shoulders jolted the House out of its last rag of decency. Only the Speaker remained unmoved. The entire Press of Great Britain bore witness next day that he had not even bowed his head. The Angel of the Constitution, for vain was the help of man, foretold him the exact moment at which the House would have broken into 'The Gubby.' He is reported to have said : ' I heard the Irish beginning to shuffle it. So I adjourned.' Pallant's version is that he added : ' And I was never so grateful to a private member in all my life as I was to Mr. Pallant.'

He made no explanation. He did not refer to orders or disorders. He simply adjourned the House till six that evening. And the House adjourned—some of it nearly on all fours.

I was not correct when I said that the Speaker was the only man who did not laugh. Woodhouse was beside me all the time. His face was set and quite white—as white, they told me, as Sir Thomas Ingell's when he went, by request, to a private interview with his Chief Whip.

## THE PUZZLER

THE Celt in all his variants from Builth to Bally-hoo,  
His mental processes are plain—one knows what he  
will do,

And can logically predicate his finish by his start :  
But the English—ah, the English !—they are quite  
a race apart.

Their psychology is bovine, their outlook crude and  
raw.

They abandon vital matters to be tickled with a  
straw ;

But the straw that they were tickled with—the  
chaff that they were fed with—

They convert into a weaver's beam to break their  
foeman's head with.

For undemocratic reasons and for motives not of  
State,

They arrive at their conclusions—largely inarticulate.  
Being void of self-expression they confide their views  
to none ;

But sometimes, in a smoking-room, one learns why  
things were done.

Yes, sometimes in a smoking-room, through clouds  
of 'Ers' and 'Ums,'

Obliquely and by inference, illumination comes,  
On some step that they have taken, or some action  
they approve—

Embellished with the *argot* of the Upper Fourth Re-  
move.

In telegraphic sentences, half nodded to their friends,  
They hint a matter's inwardness—and there the  
matter ends.

And while the Celt is talking from Valencia to  
Kirkwall,

The English—ah, the English!—don't say anything  
at all.



## THE PUZZLER

(PRE-WAR)

I HAD not seen Penfentenyou since the Middle Nineties, when he was Minister of Ways and Wood-sides in De Thouar's first Administration. Last summer, though he nominally held the same portfolio, he was his Colony's Premier in all but name, and the idol of his own Province, which is two and a half times the size of England. Politically, his creed was his growing country ; and he came over to England to develop a Great Idea in her behalf.

Believing that he had put it in train, I made haste to welcome him to my house for a week.

That he was chased to my door by his own Agent-General in a motor ; that they turned my study into a Cabinet Meeting which I was not invited to attend ; that the local telegraph all but broke down beneath the strain of hundred-word coded cables ; and that I practically broke into the house of a stranger to get him telephonic facilities on a Sunday, are things I overlook. What I objected to was his ingratitude, while I thus tore up England to help him. So I said : ' Why on earth didn't you see your Opposite Number in Town instead of bringing your office work here ? '

' Eh ? Who ? ' said he, looking up from his fourth cable since lunch.

‘See the English Minister for Ways and Wood-sides.’

‘I saw him,’ said Penfentenyou, without enthusiasm.

It seemed that he had called twice on the gentleman, but without an appointment—(‘I thought if I wasn’t big enough, my business was’)—and each time had found him engaged. A third party intervening, suggested that a meeting might be arranged if due notice were given.

‘Then,’ said Penfentenyou, ‘I called at the office at ten o’clock.’

‘But they’d be in bed,’ I cried.

‘One of the babies was awake. He told me that—that “my sort of questions”’—he slapped the pile of cables—‘were only taken between 11 and 2 P.M. So I waited.’

‘And when you got to business?’ I asked.

He made a gesture of despair. ‘It was like talking to children. They’d never heard of it.’

‘And your Opposite Number?’

Penfentenyou described him.

‘Hush! You mustn’t talk like that!’ I shuddered. ‘He’s one of the best of good fellows. You should meet him socially.’

‘I’ve done that, too,’ he said. ‘Have you?’

‘Heaven forbid!’ I cried; ‘but that’s the proper thing to say.’

‘Oh, he said all the proper things. Only I thought as this was England that they’d more or less have the hang of all the—general hang-together of my Idea. But I had to explain it from the beginning.’

‘Ah! They’d probably mislaid the papers, I said, and I told him the story of a three-million pound insurrection caused by an Under-Secretary sitting upon a mass of green-labelled correspondence instead of reading it.

‘I wonder it doesn’t happen every week,’ he answered. ‘D’you mind my having the Agent-General to dinner again to-night? I’ll wire, and he can motor down.’

The Agent-General arrived two hours later—a patient and expostulating person, visibly torn between the pulling Devil of a rampant Colony, and the placid Baker of a largely uninterested England. But with Penfentenyou behind him he had worked; for he told us that Lord Lundie—the Law Lord—was the final authority on the legal and constitutional aspects of the Great Idea, and to him it must be referred.

‘Good Heavens alive!’ thundered Penfentenyou. ‘I told you to get *that* settled last Christmas.’

‘It was the middle of the house-party season,’ said the Agent-General mildly. ‘Lord Lundie’s at Credence Green now—he spends his holidays there. It’s only forty miles off.’

‘Shan’t I disturb his Holiness?’ said Penfentenyou heavily. ‘Perhaps “my sort of questions,”’ he snorted, ‘mayn’t be discussed except at midnight.’

‘Oh, don’t be a child,’ I said.

‘What this country needs,’ said Penfentenyou, ‘is’—and for ten minutes he trumpeted rebellion.

‘What you need is to pay for your own protection,’ I cut in when he drew breath, and I showed him a

yellowish paper, supplied gratis by Government, which is called Schedule D. To my merciless delight he had never seen the thing before, and I completed my victory over him and all the Colonies with a Brassey's *Naval Annual* and a *Statesman's Year-Book*.

The Agent-General interposed with agent-generalities (but they were merely provocateurs) about Ties of Sentiment.

'They be blowed !' said Penfentenyou. 'What's the good of sentiment towards a Kindergarten ?'

'Quite so. Ties of common funk are the things that bind us together ; and the sooner you new nations realise it the better. What you need is an annual invasion. Then you'd grow up.'

'Thank you ! Thank you !' said the Agent-General. 'That's what I am always trying to tell my people.'

'But, my dear fool,' Penfentenyou almost wept, 'do you pretend that these banana-fingered amateurs at home *are* grown up ?'

'You poor, serious, pagan man,' I retorted, 'if you take 'em *that* way, you'll wreck your Great Idea.'

'Will you take him to Lord Lundie's to-morrow ?' said the Agent-General promptly.

'I suppose I must,' I said, 'if you won't.'

'Not me ! I'm going home,' said the Agent-General, and departed. (I am glad that I am no Colony's Agent-General.)

Penfentenyou continued to argue about naval contributions till 1.15 A.M. though I was victor from the first.

At ten o'clock I got him and his correspondence into the motor, and he had the decency to ask whether he had been unpolished over-night. I replied that I waited an apology. This he made excuse for renewed arguments, and used wayside shows as illustrations of the decadence of England.

For example we burst a tyre within a mile of Credence Green, and, to save time, walked into the beautifully-kept little village. His eye was caught by a building of pale-blue tin, stencilled 'Calvinist Chapel,' before whose shuttered windows an Italian organ-grinder with a petticoated monkey was playing 'Dolly Gray.'

'Yes. That's it !' snapped the egoist. 'That's a parable of the general situation in England. And look at those brutes !' A huge household removals van was halted at a public-house. The men in charge were drinking beer from blue and white mugs. It seemed to me a pretty sight, but Penfentenyou said it represented Our National Attitude.

Lord Lundie's summer resting-place we learned was a farm, a little out of the village, up a hill round which curled a high-hedged road. Only an initiated few spend their holidays at Credence Green, and they have trained the householders to keep the place select. Penfentenyou made a grievance of this as we walked up the lane, followed at a distance by the organ-grinder.

'Suppose he is having a house-party,' he said. 'Anything's possible in this insane land.'

Just at that minute we found ourselves opposite an empty villa. Its roof was of black slate, with bright unweathered ridge-tiling ; its walls were of

blood-coloured brick, cornered and banded with vermiculated stucco work, and there was cobalt, magenta, and purest apple-green window glass on either side of the front door. The whole was fenced from the road by a low, brick-pillared, flint wall, topped with a cast-iron Gothic rail, picked out in blue and gold.

Tight beds of geranium, calceolaria, and lobelia speckled the grass-plot, from whose centre rose one of the finest araucarias (its other name by the way is 'monkey-puzzler') that it has ever been my lot to see. It must have been full thirty feet high, and its foliage exquisitely answered the iron railings. Such bijou *ne plus ultras* replete with all the amenities do not, as I pointed out to Penfentenyou, transpire outside of England.

A hedge, swinging sharp right, flanked the garden, and above it on a slope of daisy-dotted meadows we could see Lord Lundie's tiled and half-timbered summer farmhouse. Of a sudden we heard voices behind the tree—the fine full tones of the unembarrassed English, speaking to their equals—that tore through the hedge like sleet through rafters.

'That it is not called "monkey puzzler" for nothing, I willingly concede'—this was a rich and rolling note—'but on the other hand——'

'I submit, me lud, that the name implies that it might, could, would, or should be ascended by a monkey, and *not* that the ascent is a physical impossibility. I believe one of our South American spider monkeys wouldn't hesitate. . . . By Jove, it might be worth trying, if——'

This was a crisper voice than the first. A third,

higher-pitched, and full of pleasant affectations, broke in.

'Oh, practical men, there is no ape here. Why do you waste one of God's own days on unprofitable discussion? Give me a match!'

'I've a good mind to make you demonstrate in your own person. Come on, Bubbles! We'll make Jimmy climb!'

There was a sound of scuffling, broken by squeaks from Jimmy of the high voice. I turned back and drew Penfentenyou into the side of the flanking hedge. I remembered to have read in a society paper that Lord Lundie's lesser name was 'Bubbles.'

'What are they doing?' Penfentenyou said sharply. 'Drunk?'

'Just playing! Superabundant vitality of the Race, you know. We'll watch 'em,' I answered. The noise ceased.

'My deliverer,' Jimmy gasped. 'The ram caught in the thicket, and—I'm the only one who can talk Neapolitan! Leggo my collar!' He cried aloud in a foreign tongue, and was answered from the gate.

'It's the Calvinistic organ-grinder,' I whispered. I had already found a practicable break at the bottom of the hedge. 'They're going to try to make the monkey climb, I believe.'

'Here—let me look!' Penfentenyou flung himself down, and rooted till he too broke a peep-hole. We lay side by side commanding the entire garden at ten yards' range.

'You know 'em?' said Penfentenyou, as I made some noise or other.

'By sight only. The big fellow in flannels is

Lord Lundie ; the light-built one with the yellow beard painted his picture at the last Academy. He's a swell R.A., James Loman.'

'And the brown chap with the hands ?'

'Tomling, Sir Christopher Tomling, the South American engineer who built the——'

'San Juan Viaduct. I know,' said Penfentenyou. 'We ought to have had him with *us*. . . . Do you think a monkey would climb the tree ?'

The organ-grinder at the gate fenced his beast with one arm as Jimmy talked.

'Don't show off your futile accomplishments,' said Lord Lundie. 'Tell him it's an experiment. Interest him !'

'Shut up, Bubbles. You aren't in court,' Jimmy replied. 'This needs delicacy. Giuseppe says——'

'Interest the monkey,' the brown engineer interrupted. 'He won't climb for love. Cut up to the house and get some biscuits, Bubbles—sugar ones—and an orange or two. No need to tell our women-folk.'

The huge white figure lobbed off at a trot which would not have disgraced a boy of seventeen. I gathered from something Jimmy let fall that the three had been at Harrow together.

'That Tomling has a head on his shoulders,' muttered Penfentenyou. 'Pity we didn't get him for the Colony. But the question is, will the monkey climb ?'

'Be quick, Jimmy. Tell the man we'll give him five bob for the loan of the beast. Now run the organ under the tree, and we'll dress it when Bubbles comes back,' Sir Christopher cried.



'I've often wondered,' said Penfentenyou, 'whether it *would* puzzle a monkey?' He had forgotten the needs of his Growing Nation, and was earnestly parting the white-thorn stems with his fingers.

Giuseppe and Jimmy did as they were told, the monkey following them with a wary and malignant eye.

'Here's a discovery,' said Jimmy. 'The singing part of this organ comes off the wheels.' He spoke volubly to the proprietor. 'Oh, it's so as Giuseppe can take it to his room o' nights. And play it. D'you hear that? The organ-grinder, after his day's crime, plays his accursed machine for love. For love, Chris! And Michael Angelo was one of 'em!'

'Don't jaw! Tell him to take the beast's petticoat off,' said Sir Christopher Tomling.

Lord Lundie returned, very little winded, through a gap higher up the hedge.

'They're all out, thank goodness!' he cried, 'but I've raided what I could. *Marrons glacés*, candied fruit, and a bag of oranges.'

'Excellent!' said the world-renowned contractor. 'Jimmy, you're the light-weight; jump up on the organ and impale these things on the leaves as I hand 'em!'

'I see,' said Jimmy, capering like a springbuck. 'Upward and onward, eh? First, he'll reach out for—how infernal prickly these leaves are!—this biscuit. Next we'll lure him on—(that's about the reach of his arm)—with the *marron glacé*, and then

he'll open out this orange. How human ! How like your ignoble career, Bubbles !'

With care and elaboration they ornamented that tree's lower branches with sugar-topped biscuits, oranges, bits of banana, and *marrons glacés* till it looked a very ape's path to Paradise.

'Unchain the Gyascutis !' said Sir Christopher commandingly. Giuseppe placed the monkey atop of the organ, where the beast, misunderstanding, stood on his head.

'He's throwing himself on the mercy of the Court, me lud,' said Jimmy. 'No—now he's interested. Now he's reaching after higher things. What wouldn't I give to have —— here' (he mentioned a name not unhonoured in British Art). 'Ambition plucking apples of Sodom !' (the monkey had pricked himself and was swearing). 'Genius hampered by Convention ! Oh, there's a whole bushful of allegories in it !'

'Give him time. He's balancing the probabilities,' said Lord Lundie.

The three closed round the monkey, hanging on his every motion with an earnestness almost equal to ours. The great judge's head—seamed and vertical forehead, iron mouth, and pike-like under-jaw, all set on that thick neck rising out of the white flannel collar—was thrown against the puckered green silk of the organ-front as it might have been a cameo of Titus. Jimmy, with raised eyes and parted lips, fingered his grizzled chestnut beard, and I was near enough to note the capable beauty of his hands. Sir Christopher stood a little apart, his arms folded behind his back, one heavy brown

boot thrust forward, chin in as curbed, and black eyebrows lowered to shade the keen eyes. Giuseppe's dark face between flashing earrings, a twisted rag of red and yellow silk round his throat, turned from the reaching yearning monkey to the pink and white biscuits spiked on the bronzed leafage. And upon them all fell the serious and workmanlike sun of an English summer forenoon.

*'Fils de Saint Louis, montez au ciel !'* said Lord Lundie suddenly in a voice that made me think of Black Caps. I do not know what the monkey thought, because at that instant he leaped off the organ and disappeared.

There was a clash of broken glass behind the tree.

The monkey's face, distorted with passion, appeared at an upper window of the house, and a starred hole in the stained-glass window to the left of the front door showed the first steps of his upward path.

'We've got to catch him,' cried Sir Christopher. 'Come along !'

They pushed at the door, which was unlocked.

'Yes. But consider the ethics of the case,' said Jimmy. 'Isn't this burglary or something, Bubbles ?'

'Settle that when he's caught,' said Sir Christopher. 'We're responsible for the beast.'

A furious clanging of bells broke out of the empty house, followed by muffled gurglings and trumpetings.

'What the deuce is that ?' I asked, half aloud.

'The plumbing, of course,' said Penfentenyou.

‘What a pity ! I believe he’d have climbed if Lord Lundie hadn’t put him off !’

‘Wait a moment, Chris,’ said Jimmy the interpreter. ‘Giuseppe says he may answer to the music of his infancy. Giuseppe therefore will go in with the organ. Orpheus with his lute, you know. *Avanti*, Orpheus ! There’s no Neapolitan for bathroom, but I fancy your friend is there.’

‘I’m not going into another man’s house with a hurdy-gurdy,’ said Lord Lundie, recoiling, as Giuseppe unshipped the working mechanism of the organ (it developed a hang-down leg) from its wheels, slipped a strap round his shoulders, and gave the handle a twist.

‘Don’t be a cad, Bubbles,’ was Jimmy’s answer. ‘You couldn’t leave us now if you were on the Woolsack. Play, Orpheus ! The Cadi accompanies.’

. . . . .

With a whoop, a buzz, and a crash, the organ sprang to life under the hand of Giuseppe, and the procession passed through the grained-to-imitate walnut front door. A moment later we saw the monkey ramping on the roof.

‘He’ll be all over the township in a minute if we don’t head him,’ said Penfentyou, leaping to his feet, and crashing into the garden. We headed him with pebbles till he retired through a window to the tuneful reminder that he had left a lot of little things behind him. As we passed the front door it swung open, and showed Jimmy the artist sitting at the bottom of a newly-cleaned staircase. He wagged his hands at us, and when we entered we

saw that the man was stricken speechless. His eyes grew red—red like a ferret's—and what little breath he had whistled shrilly. At first we thought it was a fit, and then we saw that it was mirth—the inopportune mirth of the Artistic Temperament.

The house palpitated to an infamous melody punctuated by the stump of the barrel-organ's one leg, as Giuseppe, above, moved from room to room after his rebel slave. Now and again a floor shook a little under the combined rushes of Lord Lundie and Sir Christopher Tomling, who gave many and contradictory orders. But when they could they cursed Jimmy with splendid thoroughness.

'Have you anything to do with the house?' panted Jimmy at last. 'Because we're using it just now.' He gulped. 'And I'm—ah—keeping cavè.'

'All right,' said Penfentenyou, and shut the hall door.

'Jimmy, you unspeakable blackguard! Jimmy, you cur! You coward!' (Lord Lundie's voice overbore the flood of melody.) 'Come up here! Giuseppe's saying something we don't understand.'

Jimmy listened and interpreted between hiccups.

'He says you'd better play the organ, Bubbles, and let him do the stalking. The monkey knows him.'

'By Jove, he's quite right,' said Sir Christopher from the landing. 'Take it, Bubbles, at once.'

'My God!' said Lord Lundie in horror.

The chase reverberated over our heads, from the attics to the first floor and back again. Bodies and voices met in collision and argument, and once or twice the organ hit walls and doors. Then it broke forth in a new manner.

'He's playing it,' said Jimmy. 'I know his acute Justinian ear. Are you fond of music?'

'I think Lord Lundie plays very well for a beginner,' I ventured.

'Ah! That's the trained legal intellect. Like mastering a brief. I haven't got it.' He wiped his eyes and shook.

'Hi!' said Penfentenyou, looking through the stained-glass window down the garden. 'What's that!'

A household removals van, in charge of four men, had halted at the gate. A husband and his wife—householders beyond question—quavered irresolutely up the path. He looked tired. She was certainly cross. In all this haphazard world the last couple to understand a scientific experiment.

I laid hands on Jimmy—the clamour above drowning speech—and with Penfentenyou's aid, propped him like an umbrella against the window, that he should see.

He saw, nodded, fell as an umbrella can fall, and, kneeling, beat his forehead on the shut door. Penfentenyou slid the bolt.

The furniture men reinforced the two figures on the path, and advanced, spreading generously.

'Hadn't we better warn them up-stairs?' I suggested.

'No. I'll die first!' said Jimmy. 'I'm pretty near it now. Besides, they called me names.'

I turned from the Artist to the Administrator.

'*Ceteris paribus*, I think we'd better be going,' said Penfentenyou, dealer in crises.

'Ta—take me with you,' said Jimmy. 'I've no reputation to lose, but I'd like to watch 'em from—er—outside the picture.'

'There's always a *modus vivendi*,' Penfentenyou murmured, and tiptoed along the hall to a back door, which he opened quite silently. We passed into a tangle of gooseberry bushes where, at his statesman-like example, we crawled on all fours, and regained the hedge.

Here we lay up, secure in our alibi.

'But your firm,'—the woman was wailing to the furniture removals men—'your firm *promised* me everything should be in yesterday. And it's to-day ! You should have been here yesterday !'

'The last tenants ain't out yet, lydy,' said one of them.

Lord Lundie was rapidly improving in technique, though organ-grinding, unlike the Law, is more of a calling than a trade, and he hung occasionally on a dead centre. Giuseppe, I think, was singing, but I could not understand the drift of Sir Christopher's remarks. They were Spanish.

The woman said something we did not catch.

'You might 'ave sub-let it,' the man insisted.

'Or your gentleman 'ere might.'

'But I didn't. Send for the Police at once.'

'I wouldn't do that, lydy. They're only fruit-pickers on a beano. They aren't particular where they sleep.'

'D'you mean they've been sleeping *there* ? I only had it cleaned last week. Get them out.'

'Oh, if you say so, we'll 'ave 'em out of it in two twos. Alf, fetch me the spare swingle-bar.'

'Don't ! You'll knock the paint off the door. Get them out !'

'What the 'ell else am I trying to do for you, lydy ?' the man answered with pathos ; but the woman wheeled on her mate.

'Edward ! They're all drunk here, and they're all mad there. Do something !' she said.

Edward took one short step forward, and sighed 'Hullo !' in the direction of the turbulent house. The woman walked up and down, the very figure of Domestic Tragedy. The furniture men swayed a little on their heels, and——

'Got him !' The shout rang through all the windows at once. It was followed by a bloodhound-like bay from Sir Christopher, a maniacal prestissimo on the organ, and loud cries for Jimmy. But Jimmy, at my side, rolled his congested eyeballs, owl-wise.

'I never knew them,' he said. 'I'm an orphan.'

The front door opened, and the three came forth to short-lived triumph. I had never before seen a Law Lord dressed as for tennis, with a stump-leg barrel-organ strapped to his shoulder. But it is a shy bird in this plumage. Lord Lundie strove to disembarass himself of his accoutrements much as an ill-trained Punch and Judy dog tries to escape backwards through his frilled collar. Sir Christopher, covered with limewash, cherished a bleeding thumb, and the almost crazy monkey tore at Giuseppe's hair.

The men on both sides reeled, but the woman stood her ground. 'Idiots !' she said, and once more 'Idiots !'



I could have gladdened a few convicts of my acquaintance with a photograph of Lord Lundie at that instant.

'Madam,' he began, wonderfully preserving the roll in his voice, 'it was a monkey.'

Sir Christopher sucked his thumb and nodded.

'Take it away and go,' she replied. 'Go away!'

I would have gone, and gladly, on this permission, but these still strong men must ever be justifying themselves. Lord Lundie turned to the husband, who for the first time spoke.

'I have rented this house. I am moving in,' he said.

'We ought to have been in yesterday,' the woman interrupted.

'Yes. We ought to have been in yesterday. Have you slept there overnight?' said the man peevishly.

'No, I assure you we haven't,' said Lord Lundie.

'Then go away. Go quite away,' cried the woman.

They went—in single file down the path. They went silently, re-strapping the organ on its wheels, and re-chaining the monkey to the organ.

'Damn it all!' said Penfentenyou. 'They *do* face the music, and they do stick by each other—in private life!'

'Ties of Common Funk,' I answered. Giuseppe ran to the gate and fled back to the possible world. Lord Lundie and Sir Christopher, constrained by tradition, paced slowly.

Then it came to pass that the woman, who walked behind them, lifted up her eyes, and beheld the tree which they had dressed.

‘Stop!’ she called; and they stopped. ‘Who did that?’

There was no answer. The Eternal Bad Boy in every man hung its head before the Eternal Mother in every woman.

‘Who put these disgusting things there?’ she repeated.

Suddenly Penfentenyou, Premier of his Colony in all but name, left Jimmy and me, and appeared at the gate. (If he is not turned out of office, that is how he will appear on the Day of Armageddon.)

‘Well done you!’ he cried zealously, and doffed his hat to the woman. ‘Have you any children, madam?’ he demanded.

‘Yes, two. They should have been here to-day. The firm promised——’

‘Then we’re not a minute too soon. That monkey—escaped. It was a very dangerous beast. Might have frightened your children into fits. All the organ-grinder’s fault! A most lucky thing these gentlemen caught it when they did. I hope you aren’t badly mauled, Sir Christopher?’ Shaken as I was (I wanted to get away and laugh), I could not but admire the scoundrel’s consummate tact in leading his second highest trump. An ass would have introduced Lord Lundie and they would not have believed him.

It took the trick. The couple smiled, and gave respectful thanks for their deliverance by such hands from such perils.

‘Not in the least,’ said Lord Lundie. ‘Anybody—any father—would have done as much, and—pray don’t apologise—your mistake was quite

natural.' A furniture man sniggered here, and Lord Lundie rolled an Eye of Doom on their ranks. 'By the way, if you have trouble with these persons—they seem to have taken as much as is good for them—please let me know. Er—*Good morning!*'

They turned into the lane.

'Heavens!' said Jimmy, brushing himself down. 'Who's that real man with the real head?' and we hurried after them, for they were running unsteadily, squeaking like rabbits as they ran. We overtook them in a little nut wood half a mile up the road, where they had turned aside, and were rolling. So we rolled with them, and ceased not till we had arrived at the extremity of exhaustion.

'You—you saw it all, then?' said Lord Lundie, rebuttoning his nineteen-inch collar.

'I saw it was a vital question from the first,' responded Penfentenyou, and blew his nose.

'It was. By the way, d'you mind telling me your name?'

*Summa.* Penfentenyou's Great Idea has gone through, a little chipped at the edges, but in fine and far-reaching shape. His Opposite Number worked at it like a mule—a bewildered mule, beaten from behind, coaxed from in front, and propped on either soft side by Lord Lundie of the compressed mouth and the searing tongue.

Sir Christopher Tomling has been ravished from the Argentine, where, after all, he was but preparing trade-routes for hostile peoples, and now adorns the forefront of Penfentenyou's Advisory Board. This was an unforeseen extra, as was Jimmy's gratis full-

length (it will be in this year's Academy) of Penfenteny, who has returned to his own place.

Now and again, from afar off, between the slam and bump of his shifting scenery, the glare of his manipulated limelight, and the controlled rolling of his thunder-drums, I catch his voice, lifted in encouragement and advice to his fellow-countrymen. He is quite sound on Ties of Sentiment, and—alone of Colonial Statesmen—ventures to talk of the Ties of Common Funk.

Herein I have my reward.

## THE INCARNATION OF KRISHNA MULVANEY

Wohl auf, my bully cavaliers,  
We ride to church to-day,  
The man that hasn't got a horse  
Must steal one straight away.

Be reverent, men, remember  
This is a Gottes haus.  
Du, Conrad, cut along der aisle  
And schenck der whiskey aus.

*Hans Breitmann's Ride to Church.*

ONCE upon a time, very far from England, there lived three men who loved each other so greatly that neither man nor woman could come between them. They were in no sense refined, nor to be admitted to the outer door-mats of decent folk, because they happened to be private soldiers in Her Majesty's Army ; and private soldiers of our Service have small time for self-culture. Their duty is to keep themselves and their accoutrements specklessly clean, to refrain from getting drunk more often than is necessary, to obey their superiors, and to pray for a war. All these things my friends accomplished ; and of their own motion threw in some fighting-work for which the Army Regulations did not call. Their fate sent them to serve in India, which is not a golden country, though poets have

sung otherwise. There men die with great swiftness, and those who live suffer many and curious things. I do not think that my friends concerned themselves much with the social or political aspects of the East. They attended a not unimportant war on the northern frontier, another one on our western boundary, and a third in Upper Burma. Then their regiment sat still to recruit, and the boundless monotony of cantonment life was their portion. They were drilled morning and evening on the same dusty parade-ground. They wandered up and down the same stretch of dusty white road, attended the same church and the same grog-shop, and slept in the same lime-washed barn of a barrack for two long years. There was Mulvaney, the father in the craft, who had served with various regiments from Bermuda to Halifax, old in war, scarred, reckless, resourceful, and in his pious hours an unequalled soldier. To him turned for help and comfort six and a half feet of slow-moving, heavy-footed Yorkshireman, born on the wolds, bred in the dales, and educated chiefly among the carriers' carts at the back of York railway-station. His name was Leayroyd, and his chief virtue an unmitigated patience which helped him to win fights. How Ortheris, a fox-terrier of a Cockney, ever came to be one of the trio, is a mystery which even to-day I cannot explain. 'There was always three av us,' Mulvaney used to say. 'An' by the grace av God, so long as our service lasts, three av us they'll always be. 'Tis bettther so.'

They desired no companionship beyond their own, and it was evil for any man of the Regiment who attempted dispute with them. Physical argument

was out of the question as regarded Mulvaney and the Yorkshireman ; and assault on Ortheris meant a combined attack from these twain—a business which no five men were anxious to have on their hands. Therefore they flourished, sharing their drinks, their tobacco, and their money ; good luck and evil ; battle and the chances of death ; life and the chances of happiness from Calicut in southern, to Peshawur in northern India.

Through no merit of my own it was my good fortune to be in a measure admitted to their friendship—frankly by Mulvaney from the beginning, sullenly and with reluctance by Learoyd, and suspiciously by Ortheris, who held to it that no man not in the Army could fraternise with a redcoat. ‘Like to like,’ said he. ‘I’m a bloomin’ sodger—he’s a bloomin’ civilian. ’Tain’t natural—that’s all.’

But that was not all. They thawed progressively, and in the thawing told me more of their lives and adventures than I am ever likely to write.

Omitting all else, this tale begins with the Lamentable Thirst that was at the beginning of First Causes. Never was such a thirst—Mulvaney told me so. They kicked against their compulsory virtue, but the attempt was only successful in the case of Ortheris. He, whose talents were many, went forth into the highways and stole a dog from a ‘civilian’—*videlicet*, some one, he knew not who, not in the Army. Now that civilian was but newly connected by marriage with the Colonel of the Regiment, and outcry was made from quarters least anticipated by Ortheris, and, in the end, he was forced, lest a worse thing should happen, to dispose at ridiculously un-

remunerative rates of as promising a small terrier as ever graced one end of a leading string. The purchase-money was barely sufficient for one small outbreak which led him to the guard-room. He escaped, however, with nothing worse than a severe reprimand, and a few hours of punishment drill. Not for nothing had he acquired the reputation of being 'the best soldier of his inches' in the Regiment. Mulvaney had taught personal cleanliness and efficiency as the first articles of his companions' creed. 'A dhirty man,' he was used to say, in the speech of his kind, 'goes to Clink for a weakness in the knees, an' is coort-martialled for a pair av socks missin'; but a clane man, such as is an ornament to his Service—a man whose buttons are gold, whose coat is wax upon him, an' whose 'coutrements are widout a speck—*that* man may, spakin' in reason, do fwhat he likes an' dhrink from day to divil. That's the pride av bein' dacint.'

We sat together, upon a day, in the shade of a ravine far from the barracks, where a watercourse used to run in rainy weather. Behind us was the scrub jungle, in which jackals, peacocks, the grey wolves of the North-Western Provinces, and occasionally a tiger estrayed from Central India, were supposed to dwell. In front lay the cantonment, glaring white under a glaring sun; and on either side ran the broad road that led to Delhi.

It was the scrub that suggested to my mind the wisdom of Mulvaney taking a day's leave and going upon a shooting-tour. The peacock is a holy bird throughout India, and he who slays one is in danger of being mobbed by the nearest villagers; but on



the last occasion that Mulvaney had gone forth, he had contrived, without in the least offending local religious susceptibilities, to return with six beautiful peacock skins which he sold to profit. It seemed just possible then——

‘But fwat manner av use is ut to me goin’ out widout a dhrink ? The ground’s powdher-dhry underfoot, an’ ut gets unto the throat fit to kill,’ wailed Mulvaney, looking at me reproachfully. ‘An’ a peacock is not a bird you can catch the tail av onless ye run. Can a man run on wather—an’ jungle-wather too ?’

Ortheris had considered the question in all its bearings. He spoke, chewing his pipe-stem meditatively the while :

‘Go forth, return in glory,  
To Clusium’s royal ’ome :  
An’ round these bloomin’ temples ’ang  
The bloomin’ shields o’ Rome.

You better go. You ain’t like to shoot yourself—not while there’s a chanst of liquor. Me an’ Learoyd’ll stay at ’ome an’ keep shop—’case o’ anythin’ turnin’ up. But you go out with a gas-pipe gun an’ ketch the little peacockses or somethin’. You kin get one day’s leave easy as winkin’. Go along an’ get it, an’ get peacockses or somethin’.

‘Jock,’ said Mulvaney, turning to Learoyd, who was half asleep under the shadow of the bank. He roused slowly.

‘Sitha, Mulvaaney, go,’ said he.

And Mulvaney went ; cursing his allies with Irish fluency and barrack-room point.

'Take note,' said he, when he had won his holiday, and appeared dressed in his roughest clothes with the only other regimental fowling-piece in his hand. 'Take note, Jock, an' you, Orth'ris, I am goin' in the face av my own will—all for to please you. I misdoubt anythin' will come av permiscuous huntin' afther peacocks in a desolit lan'; an' I know that I will lie down an' die wid thirrirst. Me catch peacocks for you, ye lazy scutts—an' be sacrificed by the peasantry—Ugh !'

He waved a huge paw and went away.

At twilight, long before the appointed hour, he returned empty-handed, much begrimed with dirt.

'Peacocks?' queried Ortheris from the safe rest of a barrack-room table whereon he was smoking cross-legged, Learoyd fast asleep on a bench.

'Jock,' said Mulvaney without answering, as he stirred up the sleeper. 'Jock, can ye fight? Will ye fight?'

Very slowly the meaning of the words communicated itself to the half-roused man. He understood—and again—what might these things mean? Mulvaney was shaking him savagely. Meantime the men in the room howled with delight. There was war in the confederacy at last—war and the breaking of bonds.

Barrack-room etiquette is stringent. On the direct challenge must follow the direct reply. This is more binding than the ties of tried friendship. Once again Mulvaney repeated the question. Learoyd answered by the only means in his power, and so swiftly that the Irishman had barely time to avoid the blow. The laughter around increased. Learoyd

looked bewilderedly at his friend—himself as greatly bewildered. Ortheris dropped from the table because his world was falling.

‘Come outside,’ said Mulvaney, and as the occupants of the barrack-room prepared joyously to follow, he turned and said furiously, ‘There will be no fight this night—unless any wan av you is wishful to assist. The man that does, follows on.’

No man moved. The three passed out into the moonlight, Learoyd fumbling with the buttons of his coat. The parade-ground was deserted except for the scurrying jackals. Mulvaney’s impetuous rush carried his companions far into the open ere Learoyd attempted to turn round and continue the discussion.

‘Be still now. ’Twas my fault for beginnin’ things in the middle av an end, Jock. I should ha’ comminst wid an explanation ; but, Jock, dear, on your sowl are ye fit, think you, for the finest fight that iver was—betther than fightin’ me ? Consider before ye answer.’

More than ever puzzled, Learoyd turned round two or three times, felt an arm, kicked tentatively, and answered, ‘Ah’m fit.’ He was accustomed to fight blindly at the bidding of the superior mind.

They sat them down, the men looking on from afar, and Mulvaney untangled himself in mighty words.

‘Followin’ your fools’ scheme I wint out into the thrackless desert beyond the barricks. An’ there I met a pious Hindu dhriving a bullock-kyart. I tuk ut for granted he wud be delighted for to convoy me a piece, an’ I jumped in——’

‘You long, lazy, black-haired swine,’ drawled Ortheris, who would have done the same thing under similar circumstances.

‘’Twas the height av policy. That naygur-man dhruv miles an’ miles—as far as the new railway line they’re buildin’ now back av the Tavi river. “’Tis a kyart for dhirt only,” says he now an’ again timoreously, to get me out av ut. “Dhirt I am,” sez I, “an’ the dhryest that you iver kyarted. Dhrive on, me son, an’ glory be wid you.” At that I wint to slape, an’ took no heed till he pulled up on the embankmint av the line where the coolies were pilin’ mud. There was a matther av two thousand coolies on that line—you remimber that. Prisintly a bell rang, an’ they throops off to a big pay-shed. “Where’s the white man in charge?” sez I to my kyart-dhriver. “In the shed,” sez he, “engaged on a raffle.”—“A fwhat?” sez I. “Raffle,” sez he. “You take ticket. He take money. You get nothin’.”—“Oho!” sez I, “that’s fwhat the shuperior an’ cultivated man calls a raffle, me misbeguided child av darkness an’ sin. Lead on to that raffle, though fwhat the mischief ’tis doin’ so far away from uts home—which is the charity-bazaar at Christmas, an’ the Colonel’s wife grinnin’ behind the tea-table—is more than I know.” Wid that I wint to the shed an’ found ’twas pay-day among the coolies. Their wages was on a table forninst a big, fine, red buck av a man—sivun fut high, four fut wide, an’ three fut thick, wid a fist on him like a corn-sack. He was payin’ the coolies fair an’ easy, but he wud ask each man if he wud raffle that month, an’ each man sez, “Yes,” av course. Thin he wud

deduct from their wages accordin'. Whin all was paid, he filled an ould cigar-box full av gun-wads an' scattered ut among the coolies. They did not take much joy av that performince, an' small wondher. A man close to me picks up a black gun-wad an' sings out, "I have ut."—"Good may ut do you," sez I. The coolie wint forward to this big, fine, red man, who threw a cloth off av the most sumpshus, jooled, enamelled an' variously bedivilled sedan-chair I iver saw.'

'Sedan-chair! Put your 'ead in a bag. That was a palanquin. Don't yer know a palanquin when you see it?' said Ortheris with great scorn.

'I chuse to call ut sedan-chair, an' chair ut shall be, little man,' continued the Irishman. "'Twas a most amazin' chair—all lined wid pink silk an' fitted wid red silk curtains. "Here ut is," sez the red man. "Here ut is," sez the coolie, an' he grinned weakly-ways. "Is ut any use to you?" sez the red man. "No," sez the coolie; "I'd like to make a presint av ut to you."—"I am graciously pleased to accept that same," sez the red man; an' at that all the coolies cried aloud in fwhat was mint for cheerful notes, an' wint back to their diggin', lavin' me alone in the shed. The red man saw me, an' his face grew blue on his big, fat neck. "Fwhat d'you want here?" sez he. "Standin'-room an' no more," sez I, "unless it may be fwhat ye niver had, an' that's manners, ye raffin' ruffian," for I was not goin' to have the Service throd upon. "Out of this," sez he. "I'm in charge av this section av construction."—"I'm in charge av mesilf," sez I, "an' it's like I will stay a while. D'ye raffle much in these parts?"—"Fwhat's that to you?" sez

he. "Nothin'," sez I, "but a great dale to you, for begad I'm thinkin' you get the full half av your revenue from that sedan-chair. Is ut always raffled so?" I sez, an' wid that I wint to a coolie to ask questions. Bhoys, that man's name is Dearsley, an' he's been rafflin' that ould sedan-chair monthly this matther av nine months. Ivry coolie on the section takes a ticket—or he gives 'em the go—wanst a month on pay-day. Ivry coolie that wins ut gives ut back to him, for 'tis too big to carry away, an' he'd sack the man that thried to sell ut. That Dearsley has been makin' the rowlin' wealth av Roshus by nefarious rafflin'. Think av the burnin' shame to the sufferin' coolie-man that the Army in Injia are bound to protect an' nourish in their bosoms! Two thousand coolies defrauded wanst a month!

'Dom t' coolies. Hast gotten t' cheer, man?' said Learoyd.

'Hould on. Havin' onearthed this amazin' an' stupenjus fraud committed by the man Dearsley, I hild a council av war; he thryin' all the time to sejuce me into a fight wid opprobrious language. That sedan-chair niver belonged by right to any foreman av coolies. 'Tis a king's chair or a quane's. There's gold on ut an' silk an' all manner av trapese-mints. Bhoys, 'tis not for me to countenance any sort av wrong-doin'—me bein' the ould man—but—anyway he has had ut nine months, an' he dare not make throuble av ut was taken from him. Five miles away, or ut may be six——'

There was a long pause, and the jackals howled merrily. Learoyd bared one arm, and contemplated

it in the moonlight. Then he nodded partly to himself and partly to his friends. Ortheris wriggled with suppressed emotion.

‘I thought ye wud see the reasonableness av ut,’ said Mulvaney. ‘I made bould to say as much to the man before. He was for a direct front attack—fut, horse, an’ guns—an’ all for nothin’, seein’ that I had no thransport to convey the machine away. “I will not argue wid you,” sez I, “this day, but subsequintly, Mister Dearsley, me rafflin’ jool, we talk ut out lengthways. ’Tis no good policy to swindle the naygur av his hard-earned emolumints, an’ by presint informashin’”—’twas the kyart man that tould me—“ye’ve been perpethratin’ that same for nine months. But I’m a just man,” sez I, “an’ overlookin’ the presumpshin that yondher settie wid the gilt top was not come by honust”—at that he turned sky-green, so I knew things was more thrue than tellable—“not come by honust, I’m willin’ to compound the felony for this month’s winnin’s.”’

‘Ah ! Ho !’ from Learoyd and Ortheris.

‘That man Dearsley’s rushin’ on his fate,’ continued Mulvaney, solemnly wagging his head. ‘All Hell had no name bad enough for me that tide. Faith, he called me a robber ! Me ! that was savin’ him from continuin’ in his evil ways widout a remonstrance—an’ to a man av conscience a remonstrance may change the chune av his life. “’Tis not for me to argue,” sez I, “fwhatever ye are, Mister Dearsley, but, by my hand, I’ll take away the temptation for you that lies in that sedan-chair.”—“You will have to fight me for ut,” sez he, “for

well I know you will never dare make report to any one.”—“Fight I will,” sez I, “but not this day, for I’m rejuiced for want av nourishmint.”—“Ye’re an ould bould hand,” sez he, sizin’ me up an’ down ; “an’ a jool av a fight we will have. Eat now an’ dhrink, an’ go your way.” Wid that he gave me some hump an’ whisky—good whisky—an’ we talked av this an’ that the while. “It goes hard on me now,” sez I, wipin’ my mouth, “to confiscate that piece av furniture, but justice is justice.”—“Ye’ve not got ut yet,” sez he ; “there’s the fight between.”—“There is,” sez I, “an’ a good fight. Ye shall have the pick av the best quality in my Rig’mint for the dinner you have given this day.” Thin I came hot-foot to you two. Hould your tongue, the both. ’Tis this way. To-morrow we three will go there an’ he shall have his pick betune me an’ Jock. Jock’s a deceivin’ fighter, for he is all fat to the eye, an’ he moves slow. Now I’m all beef to the look, an’ I move quick. By my reckonin’ the Dearsley man won’t take me ; so me an’ Orth’ris’ll see fair play. Jock, I tell you, ’twill be big fightin’—whipped, wid the cream above the jam. Afther the business ’twill take a good three av us—Jock’ll be very hurt—to haul away that sedan-chair.’

‘Palanquin.’ This from Ortheris.

‘Fwhatever ut is, we must have ut. ’Tis the only sellin’ piece av property widin reach that we can get so cheap. An’ fwhat’s a fight afther all ? He has robbed the naygur-man, dishonust. We rob him honust for the sake av the whisky he gave me.’

‘But wot’ll we do with the bloomin’ article when



we've got it ? Them palanquins are as big as 'ouses, an' uncommon 'ard to sell, as M'Cleary said when ye stole the sentry-box from the Curragh.'

'Who's goin' to do t' fightin'?' said Learoyd, and Ortheris subsided. The three returned to barracks without a word. Mulvaney's last argument clinched the matter. This palanquin was property, vendible and to be attained in the simplest and least embarrassing fashion. It would eventually become beer. Great was Mulvaney.

Next afternoon a procession of three formed itself and disappeared into the scrub in the direction of the new railway line. Learoyd alone was without care, for Mulvaney dived darkly into the future, and little Ortheris feared the unknown. What befell at that interview in the lonely pay-shed by the side of the half-built embankment only a few hundred coolies know, and their tale is a confusing one, running thus—

'We were at work. Three men in red coats came. They saw the Sahib—Dearsley Sahib. They made oration ; and noticeably the small man among the red-coats. Dearsley Sahib also made oration, and used many very strong words. Upon this talk they departed together to an open space, and there the fat man in the red coat fought with Dearsley Sahib after the custom of white men—with his hands, making no noise, and never at all pulling Dearsley Sahib's hair. Such of us as were not afraid beheld these things for just so long a time as a man needs to cook the mid-day meal. The small man in the red coat had possessed himself of Dearsley Sahib's watch. No, he did not steal that watch. He held

it in his hand, and at certain seasons made outcry, and the twain ceased their combat, which was like the combat of young bulls in spring. Both men were soon all red, but Dearsley Sahib was much more red than the other. Seeing this, and fearing for his life—because we greatly loved him—some fifty of us made shift to rush upon the red-coats. But a certain man—very black as to the hair, and in no way to be confused with the small man, or the fat man who fought—that man, we affirm, ran upon us, and of us he embraced some ten or fifty in both arms, and beat our heads together, so that our livers turned to water, and we ran away. It is not good to interfere in the fightings of white men. After that Dearsley Sahib fell and did not rise, these men jumped upon his stomach and despoiled him of all his money, and attempted to fire the pay-shed, and departed. Is it true that Dearsley Sahib makes no complaint of these latter things having been done? We were senseless with fear, and do not at all remember. There was no palanquin near the pay-shed. What do we know about palanquins? Is it true that Dearsley Sahib does not return to this place, on account of his sickness, for ten days? This is the fault of those bad men in the red coats, who should be severely punished; for Dearsley Sahib is both our father and mother, and we love him much. Yet, if Dearsley Sahib does not return to this place at all, we will speak the truth. There was a palanquin, for the upkeep of which we were forced to pay nine-tenths of our monthly wage. On such mulctings Dearsley Sahib allowed us to make obeisance to him before the palanquin. What

could we do ? We were poor men. He took a full half of our wages. Will the Government repay us those moneys ? Those three men in red coats bore the palanquin upon their shoulders and departed. All the money that Dearsley Sahib had taken from us was in the cushions of that palanquin. Therefore they stole it. Thousands of rupees were there—all our money. It was our bank-box, to fill which we cheerfully contributed to Dearsley Sahib three-sevenths of our monthly wage. Why does the white man look upon us with the eye of disfavour ? Before God, there was a palanquin, and now there is no palanquin ; and if they send the police here to make inquisition, we can only say that there never has been any palanquin. Why should a palanquin be near these works ? We are poor men, and we know nothing.'

Such is the simplest version of the simplest story connected with the descent upon Dearsley. From the lips of the coolies I received it. Dearsley himself was in no condition to say anything, and Mulvaney preserved a massive silence, broken only by the occasional licking of the lips. He had seen a fight so gorgeous that even his power of speech was taken from him. I respected that reserve until, three days after the affair, I discovered in a disused stable in my quarters a palanquin of unchastened splendour—evidently in past days the litter of a queen. The pole whereby it swung between the shoulders of the bearers was rich with the painted *papier-mâché* of Cashmere. The shoulder-pads were of yellow silk. The panels of the litter itself were ablaze with the loves of all the gods and goddesses

of the Hindu Pantheon—lacquer on cedar. The cedar sliding doors were fitted with hasps of translucent Jaipur enamel and ran in grooves shod with silver. The cushions were of brocaded Delhi silk, and the curtains which once hid any glimpse of the beauty of the king's palace were stiff with gold. Closer investigation showed that the entire fabric was everywhere rubbed and discoloured by time and wear ; but even thus it was sufficiently gorgeous to deserve housing on the threshold of a royal zenana. I found no fault with it, except that it was in my stable. Then, trying to lift it by the silver-shod shoulder-pole, I laughed. The road from Dearsley's pay-shed to the cantonment was a narrow and uneven one, and, traversed by three very inexperienced palanquin-bearers, one of whom was sorely battered about the head, must have been a path of torment. Still I did not quite recognise the right of the three musketeers to turn me into a fence for stolen property.

'I'm askin' you to warehouse ut,' said Mulvaney, when he was brought to consider the question. 'There's no steal in ut. Dearsley tould us we cud have ut if we fought. Jock fought—an', oh, sorr, when the throuble was at uts finest an' Jock was bleedin' like a shtuck pig, an' little Orth'ris was shquealin' on one leg chewin' big bites out av Dearsley's watch, I wud ha' given my place at the fight to have had you see wan round. He tuk Jock, as I suspicioned he would, an' Jock was deceptive. Nine roun's they were even matched, an' at the tenth—— About that palanquin now. There's not the least throuble in the world, or we wud not

ha' brought ut here. You will ondherstand that the Queen—God bless her !—does not reckon for a privit soldier to kape elephints an' palanquins an' sich in barricks. Afther we had dhragged ut down from Dearsley's through that cruel scrub that near broke Orth'ris's heart, we set ut in the ravine for a night ; an' a thief av a porcupine an' a civet-cat av a jackal roosted in ut, as well we knew in the mornin'. I put ut to you, sorr, is an iligint palanquin, fit for a princess, the natural abidin' place av all the vermin in cantonmints ? We brought ut to you, afther dhark, and put ut in your shtable. Do not let your conscience prick. Think av the rejoicin' men in the pay-shed yonder—lookin' at Dearsley wid his head tied up in a towel—an' well knowin' that they can dhraw their pay ivry month widout stoppages for ruffles. Indirectly, sorr, you have rescued from an onprincipled son av a night-hawk the peasantry av a numerous village. An' besides, will I let that sedan-chair rot on our hands ? Not I. 'Tis not every day a piece av pure joolry comes into the market. There's not a king widin these forty miles'—he waved his hand round the dusty horizon—'not a king wud not be glad to buy ut. Some day meself, whin I have leisure, I'll take ut up along the road an' dishpose av ut.'

'How ?' said I, for I knew the man was capable of anything.

'Get into ut, av coorse, and keep wan eye open through the curtains. Whin I see a likely man av the native persuasion, I will descind blushin' from my canopy and say, "Buy a palanquin, ye black scutt ?" I will have to hire four men to carry me

first, though ; and that's impossible till next pay-day.'

Curiously enough, Learoyd, who had fought for the prize, and in the winning secured the highest pleasure life had to offer him, was altogether disposed to undervalue it, while Ortheris openly said it would be better to break the thing up. Dearsley, he argued, might be a many-sided man, capable, despite his magnificent fighting qualities, of setting in motion the machinery of the civil law—a thing much abhorred by the soldier. Under any circumstances their fun had come and passed ; the next pay-day was close at hand, when there would be beer for all. Wherefore longer conserve the painted palanquin ?

'A first-class rifle-shot an' a good little man av your inches you are,' said Mulvaney. 'But you niver had a head worth a soft-boiled egg. 'Tis me has to lie awake av nights schamin' an' plottin' for the three av us. Orth'ris, me son, 'tis no matther av a few gallons av beer—no, nor twenty gallons—but tubs an' vats an' firkins in that sedan-chair. Who ut was, an' what ut was, an' how ut got there, we do not know ; but I know in my bones that you an' me an' Jock wid his sprained thumb will get a fortune thereby. Lave me alone, an' let me think.'

Meantime the palanquin stayed in my stall, the key of which was in Mulvaney's hands.

Pay-day came, and with it beer. It was not in experience to hope that Mulvaney, dried by four weeks' drought, would avoid excess. Next morning he and the palanquin had disappeared. He had taken the precaution of getting three days' leave 'to see a friend on the railway,' and the Colonel, well

knowing that the seasonal outburst was near, and hoping it would spend its force beyond the limits of his jurisdiction, cheerfully gave him all he demanded. At this point Mulvaney's history, as recorded in the Mess-room, stopped.

Ortheris carried it not much further. 'No, 'e wasn't drunk,' said the little man loyally, 'the liquor was no more than feelin' its way round inside of 'im ; but 'e went an' filled that 'ole bloomin' palanquin with bottles 'fore 'e went off. 'E's gone an' 'ired six men to carry 'im, an' I 'ad to 'elp 'im into 'is nupshal couch, 'cause 'e wouldn't 'ear reason. 'E's gone off in 'is shirt an' trousers, swearin' tremenjus—gone down the road in the palanquin, wavin' 'is legs out o' windy.'

'Yes,' said I, 'but where?'

'Now you arx me a question. 'E said 'e was goin' to sell that palanquin, but from observations what happened when I was stuffin' 'im through the door, I fancy 'e's gone to the new embankment to mock at Dearsley. 'Soon as Jock's off duty I'm goin' there to see if 'e's safe—not Mulvaney, but t'other man. My saints, but I pity 'im as 'elps Terence out o' the palanquin when 'e's once fair drunk !'

'He'll come back without harm,' I said.

' 'Course 'e will. On'y question is, what'll 'e be doin' on the road ? Killing Dearsley, like as not. 'E shouldn't 'a gone without Jock or me.'

Reinforced by Learoyd, Ortheris sought the foreman of the coolie-gang. Dearsley's head was still embellished with towels. Mulvaney, drunk or sober, would have struck no man in that condition,

and Dearsley indignantly denied that he would have taken advantage of the intoxicated brave.

‘I had my pick o’ you two,’ he explained to Learoyd, ‘and you got my palanquin—not before I’d made my profit on it. Why’d I do harm when everything’s settled? Your man *did* come here—drunk as Davy’s sow on a frosty night—came a-purpose to mock me—stuck his head out of the door an’ called me a crucified hodman. I made him drunker, an’ sent him along. But I never touched him.’

To these things, Learoyd, slow to perceive the evidences of sincerity, answered only, ‘If owt comes to Mulvaaney ’long o’ you, I’ll gripple you, clouts or no clouts on your ugly head, an’ I’ll draw t’ throat twistyways, man. See there now.’

The embassy removed itself, and Dearsley, the battered, laughed alone over his supper that evening.

Three days passed—a fourth and a fifth. The week drew to a close and Mulvaney did not return. He, his royal palanquin, and his six attendants, had vanished into air. A very large and very tipsy soldier, his feet sticking out of the litter of a reigning princess, is not a thing to travel along the ways without comment. Yet no man of all the country round had seen any such wonder. He was, and he was not; and Learoyd suggested the immediate smashment of Dearsley as a sacrifice to his ghost. Ortheris insisted that all was well, and in the light of past experience his hopes seemed reasonable.

‘When Mulvaney goes up the road,’ said he, ‘’e’s like to go a very long ways up, specially when ’e’s so blue drunk as ’e is now. But what gits me



is 'is not bein' 'eard of pullin' wool off the niggers somewheres about. That don't look good. The drink must ha' died out in 'im by this, unless 'e's broke a bank, an' then—Why don't 'e come back? 'E didn't ought to ha' gone off without us.'

Even Ortheris's heart sank at the end of the seventh day, for half the Regiment were out scouring the countryside, and Learoyd had been forced to fight two men who hinted openly that Mulvaney had deserted. To do him justice, the Colonel laughed at the notion, even when it was put forward by his much-trusted Adjutant.

'Mulvaney would as soon think of deserting as you would,' said he. 'No ; he's either fallen into a mischief among the villagers—and yet that isn't likely, for he'd blarney himself out of the Pit ; or else he is engaged on urgent private affairs—some stupendous devilment that we shall hear of at Mess after it has been the round of the barrack-rooms. The worst of it is that I shall have to give him twenty-eight days' confinement at least for being absent without leave, just when I most want him to lick the new batch of recruits into shape. I never knew a man who could put a polish on young soldiers as quickly as Mulvaney can. How does he do it ?'

'With blarney and the buckle-end of a belt, sir,' said the Adjutant. 'He is worth a couple of non-commissioned officers when we are dealing with an Irish draft, and the London lads seem to adore him. The worst of it is that if he goes to the cells the other two are neither to hold nor to bind till he comes out again. I believe Ortheris preaches mutiny on those occasions, and I know that the mere presence of

Learoyd mourning for Mulvaney kills all the cheerfulness of his room. The sergeants tell me that he allows no man to laugh when he feels unhappy. They are a queer gang.'

'For all that, I wish we had a few more of them. I like a well-conducted regiment, but these pasty-faced, shifty-eyed, mealy-mouthed young slouchers from the depot worry me sometimes with their offensive virtue. They don't seem to have backbone enough to do anything but play cards and prow round the married quarters. I believe I'd forgive that old villain on the spot if he turned up with any sort of explanation that I could in decency accept.'

'Not likely to be much difficulty about that, sir,' said the Adjutant. 'Mulvaney's explanations are only one degree less wonderful than his performances. They say that when he was in the Black Tyrone, before he came to us, he was discovered on the banks of the Liffey trying to sell his Colonel's charger to a Donegal dealer as a perfect lady's hack. Shackbolt commanded the Tyrone then.'

'Shackbolt must have had apoplexy at the thought of his ramping war-horses answering to that description. He used to buy unbacked devils, and tame them on some pet theory of starvation. What did Mulvaney say?'

'That he was a member of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, anxious to "sell the poor baste where he would get something to fill out his dimples." Shackbolt laughed, but I fancy that was why Mulvaney exchanged to ours.'

'I wish he were back,' said the Colonel; 'for I like him and believe he likes me.'

That evening, to cheer our souls, Learoyd, Ortheris, and I went into the waste to smoke out a porcupine. All the dogs attended, but even their clamour—and they began to discuss the shortcomings of porcupines before they left cantonments—could not take us out of ourselves. A large, low moon turned the tops of the plume-grass to silver, and the stunted camelthorn bushes and sour tamarisks into the likenesses of trooping devils. The smell of the sun had not left the earth, and little aimless winds blowing across the rose-gardens to the southward brought the scent of dried roses and water. Our fire once started, and the dogs craftily disposed to wait the dash of the porcupine, we climbed to the top of a rain-scarred hillock of earth, and looked across the scrub seamed with cattle paths, white with the long grass, and dotted with spots of level pond-bottom, where the snipe would gather in winter.

‘This,’ said Ortheris, with a sigh, as he took in the unkempt desolation of it all, ‘this is sanguinary. This is unusually sanguinary. Sort o’ mad country. Like a grate when the fire’s put out by the sun.’ He shaded his eyes against the moonlight. ‘An’ there’s a loony dancin’ in the middle of it all. Quite right. I’d dance too if I wasn’t so downheart.’

There pranced a Portent in the face of the moon—a huge and ragged spirit of the waste, that flapped its wings from afar. It had risen out of the earth; it was coming towards us, and its outline was never twice the same. The toga, table-cloth, or dressing-gown, whatever the creature wore, took a hundred shapes. Once it stopped on a neighbouring mound and flung all its legs and arms to the winds.

'My, but that scarecrow 'as got 'em bad !' said Ortheris. 'Seems like if 'e comes any further we'll 'ave to argify with 'im.'

Learoyd raised himself from the dirt as a bull clears his flanks of the wallow. And as a bull bellows, so he, after a short minute at gaze, gave tongue to the stars.

'MULVAANEY ! MULVAANEY ! A-hoo !'

Oh, then it was that we yelled, and the figure dipped into the hollow, till, with a crash of rending grass, the lost one strode up to the light of the fire, and disappeared to the waist in a wave of joyous dogs ! Then Learoyd and Ortheris gave greeting, bass and falsetto together, both swallowing a lump in the throat.

'You damned fool !' said they, and severally pounded him with their fists.

'Go aisy !' he answered, wrapping a huge arm round each. 'I wud have you to know that I am a god, to be treated as such—tho', by my faith, I fancy I've got to go to the gyard-room just like a privit soldier.'

The latter part of the sentence destroyed the suspicions raised by the former. Any one would have been justified in regarding Mulvaney as mad. He was hatless and shoeless, and his shirt and trousers were dropping off him. But he wore one wondrous garment—a gigantic cloak that fell from collar-bone to heel—of pale pink silk, wrought all over in cunningest needlework of hands long since dead, with the loves of the Hindu gods. The monstrous figures leaped in and out of the light of the fire as he settled the folds round him.

Ortheris handled the stuff respectfully for a moment while I was trying to remember where I had seen it before. Then he screamed, 'What 'ave you done with the palanquin? You're wearin' the linin'.'

'I am,' said the Irishman, 'an' by the same token the 'broidery is scrapin' my hide off. I've lived in this sumpshus counterpane for four days. Me son, I begin to onderstand why the naygur is no use. Widout me boots, an' me trousies like an openwork stocking on a gyurl's leg at a dance, I begin to feel like a naygur-man—all fearful an' timoreous. Give me a pipe an' I'll tell on.'

He lit a pipe, resumed his grip of his two friends, and rocked to and fro in a gale of laughter.

'Mulvaney,' said Ortheris sternly, "'tain't no time for laughin'. You've given Jock an' me more trouble than you're worth. You 'ave been absent without leave an' you'll go into cells for that; an' you 'ave come back disgustin'ly dressed an' most improper in the linin' o' that bloomin' palanquin. Instid of which you laugh. An' *we* thought you was dead all the time.'

'Bhoys,' said the culprit, still shaking gently, 'whin I've done my tale you may cry if you like, an' little Orth'ris here can thrample my inside out. Ha' done an' listen. My performinces have been stupenjuss; my luck has been the blessed luck av the British Army—an' there's no bettther than that. I went out dhrunk an' dhrinkin' in the palanquin, and I have come back a pink god. Did any of you go to Dearsley afther my time was up? He was at the bottom of ut all.'

' Ah said so,' murmured Learoyd. ' To-morrow Ah'll smash t' face in upon his heead.'

' Ye will not. Dearsley's a jool av a man. Afther Ortheris had put me into the palanquin an' the six bearer-men were gruntin' down the road, I tuk thought to mock Dearsley for that fight. So I tould thim, "Go to the embankmint," and there, bein' most amazin' full, I shtuck my head out av the concern an' passed compliments wid Dearsley. I must ha' miscalled him outrageous, for whin I am that way the Power av the Tongue comes on me. I can bare remimber tellin' him that his mouth opened endways like the mouth av a skate, which was throe afther Learoyd had handled ut ; an' I clear remimber his takin' no manner nor matter av offence, but givin' me a big dhrink of beer. 'Twas the beer did the thrick, for I crawled back into the palanquin, steppin' on me right ear wid me left foot, an' thin I slept like the dead. Wanst I half-roused, an' begad the noise in my head was tremenjus—roarin' an' rattlin' an' poundin', such as was quite new to me. "Mother av Mercy," thinks I, "phwat a concertina I will have on my shoulders whin I wake !" An' wid that I curls mysilf up to sleep before ut should get hould on me. Bhoys, that noise was not dhrink, 'twas the rattle av a thrain !'

There followed an impressive pause.

' Yes, he had put me on a thrain—put me, palanquin an' all, an' six black assassins av his own coolies that was in his nefarious confidence, on the flat av a ballast-thruck, and we were rowlin' an' bowlin' along to Benares. Glory be that I did not wake up thin an' introjuce mysilf to the coolies.

As I was sayin', I slept for the betther part av a day an' a night. But remimber you, that that man Dearsley had packed me off on wan av his material-thrains to Benares, all for to make me overstay my leave an' get me into the cells.'

The explanation was an eminently rational one. Benares lay at least ten hours by rail from the cantonments, and nothing in the world could have saved Mulvaney from arrest as a deserter had he appeared there in the apparel of his orgies. Dearsley had not forgotten to take revenge. Learoyd, drawing back a little, began to place soft blows over selected portions of Mulvaney's body. His thoughts were away on the embankment and they meditated evil for Dearsley. Mulvaney continued—

'Whin I was full awake the palanquin was set down in a street, I suspicioned, for I cud hear people passin' an' talkin'. But I knew well I was far from home. There is a queer smell upon our cantonmints—a smell av dried earth and brick-kilns wid whiffs av cavalry stable-litter. This place smelt marigold flowers an' bad wather, an' wanst somethin' alive came an' blew heavy wid his muzzle at the chink av the shutter. "It's in a village I am," thinks I to myself, "an' the parochial buffalo is investigatin' the palanquin." But anyways I had no desire to move. Only lie still whin you're in foreign parts an' the standin' luck av the British Army will carry ye through. That is an epigram. I made ut.

'Thin a lot av whishperin' divils surrounded the palanquin. "Take ut up," sez wan man. "But who'll pay us?" sez another. "The Maharanee's minister, av coorse," sez the man. "Oho!" sez

I to mysilf, "I'm a quane in me own right, wid a minister to pay me expenses. I'll be an emperor if I lie still long enough ; but this is no village I've found." I lay quiet, but I gummed me right eye to a crack av the shutters, an' I saw that the whole street was crammed wid palanquins an' horses, an' a sprinklin' av naked priests all yellow powder an' tigers' tails. But I may tell you, Orth'ris, an' you, Learoyd, that av all the palanquins ours was the most imperial an' magnificent. Now a palanquin means a native lady all the world over, except whin a soldier av the Quane happens to be takin' a ride. "Women an' priests !" sez I. "Your father's son is in the right pew this time, Terence. There will be proceedin's." Six black divils in pink muslin tuk up the palanquin, an' oh ! but the rowlin' an' the rockin' made me sick. Thin we got fair jammed among the palanquins—not more than fifty av them—an' we grated an' bumped like Queenstown potato-smacks in a runnin' tide. I cud hear the women gigglin' an' squirkin' in their palanquins, but mine was the royal equipage. They made way for ut, an', begad, the pink muslin men o' mine were howlin', "Room for the Maharanee av Gokral-Seetarun." Do you know aught av the lady, sorr ?

'Yes,' said I. 'She is a very estimable old queen of the Central Indian States, and they say she is fat. How on earth could she go to Benares without all the city knowing her palanquin ?'

'Twas the eternal foolishness av the naygur-man. They saw the palanquin lying loneful an' forlorn-some, an' the beauty av ut, after Dearsley's men had dhropped ut and gone away, an' they gave ut the



best name that occurred to thim. Quite right too. For aught we know the ould lady was thravellin' *incog*—like me. I'm glad to hear she's fat. I was no light weight mysilf, an' my men were mortal anxious to dhrop me under a great big archway promiscuously ornamented wid the most improper carvin's an' cuttin's I iver saw. Begad ! they made me blush—like a—like a Maharanee.'

'The temple of Prithi-Devi,' I murmured, remembering the monstrous horrors of that sculptured archway at Benares.

'Pretty Devilskins, savin' your presence, sorr ! There was nothin' pretty about ut, except me. 'Twas all half dhark, an' whin the coolies left they shut a big black gate behind av us, an' half a company av fat yellow priests began pully-haulin' the palanquins into a dharker place yet—a big stone hall full av pillars, an' gods, an' incense, an' all manner av similar thruck. The gate disconcerted me, for I perceived I wud have to go forward to get out, my retreat bein' cut off. By the same token a good priest makes a bad palanquin-coolie. Begad ! they nearly turned me inside out draggin' the palanquin to the temple. Now the disposishin av the forces inside was this way. The Maharanee av Gokral-Seetarun—that was me—lay by the favour av Providence on the far left flank behind the dhark av a pillar carved with elephints' heads. The remainder av the palanquins was in a big half-circle facin' in to the biggest, fattest, an' most amazin' she-god that iver I dreamed av. Her head ran up into the black above us, an' her feet stuck out in the light av a little fire av melted butter that a priest

was feedin' out av a butter-dish. Thin a man began to sing an' play on somethin' back in the dhark, an' 'twas a queer song. Ut made my hair lift on the back av my neck. Thin the doors av all the palanquins slid back, an' the women bundled out. I saw what I'll niver see again. 'Twas more glorious than thransformations at a pantomime, for they was in pink an' blue an' silver an' red an' grass green, wid di'monds an' imralsds an' great red rubies all over thim. But that was the least part av the glory. Oh, bhoys, they were more lovely than the like av any loveliness in hiven; ay, their little bare feet were betther than the white hands av a lord's lady, an' their mouths were like puckered roses, an' their eyes were bigger an' dharker than the eyes av any livin' women I've seen. Ye may laugh, but I'm speakin' truth. I niver saw the like, an' niver I will again.'

'Seeing that in all probability you were watching the wives and daughters of most of the kings of India, the chances are that you won't,' I said, for it was dawning on me that Mulvaney had stumbled upon a big Queens' Praying at Benares.

'I niver will,' he said mournfully. 'That sight doesn't come twist to any man. It made me ashamed to watch. A fat priest knocked at my door. I didn't think he'd have the insolence to disturb the Maharanee av Gokral-Seetarun, so I lay still. "The old cow's asleep," sez he to another. "Let her be," sez that. "'Twill be long before she has a calf!" I might ha' known before he spoke that all a woman prays for in Injia—an' for matter o' that in England too—is childher. That made me more

sorry I'd come, me bein', as you well know, a childless man.'

He was silent for a moment, thinking of his little son, dead many years ago.

'They prayed, an' the butter-fires blazed up, an' the incense turned everything blue, an' betune that an' the fires the women looked as tho' they were all ablaze an' twinklin'. They tuk hoult av the she-god's knees, they cried out an' they threw themselves about, an' that world-without-end-amen music was dhrivin' thim mad. Mother av Hiven ! how they cried, an' the ould she-god grinnin' above thim all so scornful ! The dhrink was dyin' out in me fast, an' I was thinkin' harder than the thoughts wud go through my head—thinkin' how to get out, an' all manner of nonsense as well. The women were rockin' in rows, their di'mond belts clickin', an' the tears runnin' out betune their hands, an' the lights were goin' lower an' dharker. Thin there was a blaze like lightnin' from the roof, an' that showed me the inside av the palanquin, an' at the end where my foot was, stood the livin' spit an' image o' mysilf worked on the linin'. This man here ut was.'

He hunted in the folds of his pink cloak, ran a hand under one, and thrust into the firelight a foot-long embroidered presentment of the great god Krishna, playing on a flute. The heavy jowl, the staring eye, and the blue-black moustache of the god made up a far-off resemblance to Mulvaney.

'The blaze was gone in a wink, but the whole schame came to me thin. I believe I was mad too. I slid the off-shutter open an' rowled out into the dhark behind the elephint-head pillar, tucked up

my trouses to my knees, slipped off my boots an' tuk a general houl't av all the pink linin' av the palanquin. Glory be, ut ripped out like a woman's dhriss when you tread on ut at a sargints' ball, an' a bottle came with ut. I tuk the bottle an' the next minut' I was out av the dhark av the pillar, the pink linin' wrapped round me most graceful, the music thunderin' like kettledrums, an' a could draft blowin' round my bare legs. By this hand that did ut, I was Krishna tootlin' on the flute—the god that the Rig'mental Chaplain talks about. A sweet sight I must ha' looked. I knew my eyes were big, and my face was wax-white, an' at the worst I must ha' looked like a ghost. But they took me for the livin' god. The music stopped, and the women were dead dumb, an' I crooked my legs like a shepherd on a china basin, an' I did the ghost-waggle with my feet as I had done ut at the Rig'mental Theatre many times, an' I slid acrost the width av that temple in front av the she-god tootlin' on the beer bottle.'

'Wot did you toot?' demanded Ortheris the practical.

'Me? Oh!' Mulvaney sprang up, suiting the action to the word, and sliding gravely in front of us, a dilapidated but imposing deity in the half light. 'I sang—

'Only say  
You'll be Mrs. Brallaghan.  
Don't say nay,  
Charmin' Judy Callaghan.

I didn't know me own voice when I sang. An' oh! 'twas pitiful to see the women. The darlin's

were down on their faces. Whin I passed the last wan I cud see her poor little fingers workin' one in another as if she wanted to touch my feet. So I dhrew the tail av this pink overcoat over her head for the greater honour, an' I slid into the dhark on the other side av the temple, and fetched up in the arms av a big fat priest. All I wanted was to get away clear. So I tuk him by his greasy throat an' shut the speech out av him. "Out!" sez I. "Which way, ye fat heathen?"—"Oh!" sez he. "Man," sez I. "White man, soldier man, common soldier man. Where in the name av confusion is the back door?" The women in the temple were still on their faces, an' a young priest was holdin' out his arms above their heads.

"This way," sez my fat friend, duckin' behind a big bull-god an' divin' into a passage. Thin I remimbered that I must ha' made the miraculous reputation av that temple for the next fifty years. "Not so fast," I sez, an' I held out both my hands wid a wink. That ould thief smiled like a father. I tuk him by the back av the neck in case he should be wishful to put a knife into me unbeknowst, an' I ran him up an' down the passage twice to collect his sensibilities! "Be quiet," sez he, in English. "Now you talk sense," I sez. "Fwhat'll you give me for the use av that most iligint palanquin I have no time to take away?"—"Don't tell," sez he. "Is ut like?" sez I. "But ye might give me my railway fare. I'm far from my home an' I've done you a service." Bhoys, 'tis a good thing to be a priest. The ould man niver throubled himself to dhraw from a bank. As I will prove to you subse-

quint, he philandered all round the slack av his clothes an' began dribblin' ten-rupee notes, old gold mohurs, and rupees into my hand till I could hould no more.'

'You lie!' said Ortheris. 'You're mad or sunstrook. A native don't give coin unless you cut it out o' 'im. 'Tain't nature.'

'Then my lie an' my sunstroke is concealed under that lump av sod yonder,' retorted Mulvaney unruffled, nodding across the scrub. 'An' there's a dale more in nature than your squidgy little legs have iver taken you to, Orth'ris, me son. Four hundred an' thirty-four rupees by my reckonin', an' a big fat gold necklace that I took from him as a remimbrancer, was our share in that business.'

'An' 'e give it you for love?' said Ortheris.

'We were alone in that passage. Maybe I was a trifle too pressin', but considher fwhat I had done for the good av the temple and the iverlastin' joy av those women. 'Twas cheap at the price. I wud ha' taken more if I cud ha' found ut. I turned the ould man upside down at the last, but he was milked dhry. Thin he opened a door in another passage an' I found mysilf up to my knees in Benares river-water, an' bad smellin' ut is. More by token I had come out on the river-line close to the burnin' ghat and contagious to a cracklin' corpse. This was in the heart av the night, for I had been four hours in the temple. There was a crowd av boats tied up, so I tuk wan an' wint acrost the river. Thin I came home acrost country, lyin' up by day.'

'How on earth did you manage?' I said.

'How did Sir Frederick Roberts get from Cabul

to Candahar ? He marched an' he niver tould how near he was to breakin' down. That's why he is fwat he is. An' now—' Mulvaney yawned portentously. 'Now I will go an' give myself up for absince widout leave. It's eight-an'-twenty days an' the rough end of the Colonel's tongue in Orderly Room, any way you look at ut. But 'tis cheap at the price.'

'Mulvaney,' said I softly. 'If there happens to be any sort of excuse that the Colonel can in any way accept, I have a notion that you'll get nothing more than the dressing-down. The new recruits are in, and——'

'Not a word more, sorr. Is ut excuses the old man wants ? 'Tis not my way, but he shall have thim. I'll tell him I was engaged in financial operations connected wid a church,' and he flapped his way to cantonments and the cells, singing lustily—

' So they sent a corp'ril's file,  
And they put me in the gyard-room  
For conduct unbecomin' of a soldier.'

And when he was lost in the mist of the moonlight we could hear the refrain—

' Bang upon the big drum, bash upon the cymbals,  
As we go marchin' along, boys, oh !  
For although in this campaign  
There's no whisky nor champagne,  
We'll keep our spirits goin' with a song, boys ! '

Therewith he surrendered himself to the joyful and almost weeping guard, and was made much of by his fellows. But to the Colonel he said that he

had been smitten with sunstroke and had lain insensible on a villager's cot for untold hours ; and between laughter and goodwill the affair was smoothed over, so that he could, next day, teach the new recruits how to 'Fear God, Honour the Queen, Shoot Straight, and Keep Clean.'



## GALLIO'S SONG

*'And Gallio cared for none of these things.'*—ACTS xviii, 17.

ALL day long to the judgment-seat  
The crazed Provincials drew—  
All day long at their ruler's feet  
Howled for the blood of the Jew.  
Insurrection with one accord  
Banded itself and woke,  
And Paul was about to open his mouth  
When Achaia's Deputy spoke :—

'Whether the God descend from above  
Or the Man ascend upon high,  
Whether this maker of tents be Jove  
Or a younger deity—  
I will be no judge between your gods  
And your godless bickerings.  
Lictor, drive them hence with rods—  
I care for none of these things !

'Were it a question of lawful due  
Or Cæsar's rule denied,  
Reason would I should bear with you  
And order it well to be tried ;  
But this is a question of words and names.  
I know the strife it brings.  
I will not pass upon any your claims.  
I care for none of these things.

‘ One thing only I see most clear,  
As I pray you also see.  
Claudius Cæsar hath set me here  
Rome’s Deputy to be.  
It is Her peace that ye go to break—  
Not mine, nor any king’s.  
But, touching your clamour of “ Conscience sake,”  
I care for none of these things.

‘ Whether ye rise for the sake of a creed,  
Or riot in hope of spoil,  
Equally will I punish the deed,  
Equally check the broil ;  
Nowise permitting injustice at all  
From whatever doctrine it springs—  
But—whether ye follow Priapus or Paul,  
I care for none of these things !’

## LITTLE FOXES

### A TALE OF THE GIHON HUNT

A Fox came out of his earth on the banks of the great River Gihon, which waters Ethiopia. He saw a white man riding through the dry dhurra-stalks, and, that his destiny might be fulfilled, barked at him.

The rider drew rein among the villagers round his stirrup.

‘What,’ said he, ‘is that?’

‘That,’ said the Sheikh of the village, ‘is a fox, O Excellency Our Governor.’

‘It is not, then, a jackal?’

‘No jackal, but Abu Hussein the father of cunning.’

‘Also,’ the white man spoke half aloud, ‘I am Mudir of this Province.’

‘It is true,’ they cried. ‘Ya, Saart el Mudir’ (O Excellency Our Governor).

The Great River Gihon, well used to the moods of kings, slid between his mile-wide banks toward the sea, while the Governor praised God in a loud and searching cry never before heard by the river.

When he had lowered his right forefinger from behind his right ear, the villagers talked to him of their crops—barley, dhurra, millet, onions, and the

like. The Governor stood in his stirrups. North he looked up a strip of green cultivation a few hundred yards wide that lay like a carpet between the river and the tawny line of the desert. Sixty miles that strip stretched before him, and as many behind. At every half-mile a groaning waterwheel lifted the soft water from the river to the crops by way of a mud-built aqueduct. A foot or so wide was the water-channel ; five foot or more high was the bank on which it ran, and its base was broad in proportion. Abu Hussein, misnamed the Father of Cunning, drank from the river below his earth, and his shadow was long in the low sun. He could not understand the loud cry which the Governor had cried.

The Sheikh of the village spoke of the crops from which the rulers of all lands draw revenue ; but the Governor's eyes were fixed, between his horse's ears, on the nearest water-channel.

'Very like a ditch in Ireland,' he murmured, and smiled, dreaming of a razor-topped bank in distant Kildare.

Encouraged by that smile, the Sheikh continued. 'When crops fail it is necessary to remit taxation. Then it is a good thing, O Excellency Our Governor, that you come and see the crops which have failed, and discover that we have not lied.'

'Assuredly.' The Governor shortened his reins. The horse cantered on, rose at the embankment of the water-channel, changed leg cleverly on top, and hopped down in a cloud of golden dust.

Abu Hussein from his earth watched with interest. He had never before seen such things.

'Assuredly,' the Governor repeated, and came

back by the way he had gone. 'It is always best to see for one's self.'

An ancient and still bullet-speckled stern-wheel steamer, with a barge lashed to her side, came round the river bend. She whistled to tell the Governor his dinner was ready, and the horse, seeing his fodder piled on the barge, whinnied back.

'Moreover,' the Sheikh added, 'in the days of the Oppression the Emirs and their creatures dispossessed many people of their lands. All up and down the river our people are waiting to return to their lawful fields.'

'Judges have been appointed to settle that matter,' said the Governor. 'They will presently come in steamers and hear the witnesses.'

'Wherefore? Did the Judges kill the Emirs? We would rather be judged by the men who executed God's judgment on the Emirs. We would rather abide by *your* decision, O Excellency Our Governor.'

The Governor nodded. It was a year since he had seen the Emirs stretched close and still round the reddened sheepskin where lay El Mahdi, the Prophet of God. Now there remained no trace of their dominion except the old steamer, once part of a Dervish flotilla, which was his house and office. She sidled into the shore, lowered a plank, and the Governor followed his horse aboard.

Lights burned on her till late, dully reflected in the river that tugged at her mooring-ropes. The Governor read, not for the first time, the administration reports of one John Jorrocks, M.F.H.

'We shall need,' he said suddenly to his Inspector, 'about ten couple. I'll get 'em when I go home. You'll be Whip, Baker?'

The Inspector, who was not yet twenty-five, signified his assent in the usual manner, while Abu Hussein barked at the vast desert moon.

‘Ha!’ said the Governor, coming out in his pyjamas, ‘we’ll be giving you capivi in another three months, my friend.’

It was four, as a matter of fact, ere a steamer with a melodious bargeful of hounds anchored at that landing. The Inspector leaped down among them, and the homesick wanderers received him as a brother.

‘Everybody fed ’em everything on board ship, but they’re real dainty hounds at bottom,’ the Governor explained. ‘That’s Royal you’ve got hold of—the pick of the bunch—and the bitch that’s got hold of you—she’s a little excited—is May Queen. Merriman, out of Cottesmore Maudlin, you know.’

‘I know. “Grand old betch with the tan eyebrows,”’ the Inspector cooed. ‘Oh, Ben! I shall take an interest in life now. Hark to ’em! O hark!’

Abu Hussein, under the high bank, went about his night’s work. An eddy carried his scent to the barge, and three villages heard the crash of music that followed. Even then Abu Hussein did not know better than to bark in reply.

‘Well, what about my Province?’ the Governor asked.

‘Not so bad,’ the Inspector answered, with Royal’s head between his knees. ‘Of course, all the villages want remission of taxes, but, as far as I can see, the whole country’s stinkin’ with foxes. Our trouble

will be choppin' 'em in cover. I've got a list of the only villages entitled to any remission. What d'you call this flat-sided, blue-mottled beast with the jowl ?'

'Beagle-boy. I have my doubts about him. Do you think we can get two days a week ?'

'Easy ; and as many byes as you please. The Sheikh of this village here tells me that his barley has failed, and he wants a fifty per cent remission.'

'We'll begin with him to-morrow, and look at his crops as we go. Nothing like personal supervision,' said the Governor.

They began at sunrise. The pack flew off the barge in every direction, and, after gambols, dug like terriers at Abu Hussein's many earths. Then they drank themselves pot-bellied on Gihon water while the Governor and the Inspector chastised them with whips. Scorpions were added ; for May Queen nosed one, and was removed to the barge lamenting. Mystery (a puppy, alas !) met a snake, and the blue-mottled Beagle-boy (never a dainty hound) ate that which he should have passed by. Only Royal, of the Belvoir tan head and the sad, discerning eyes, made any attempt to uphold the honour of England before the watching village.

'You can't expect everything,' said the Governor after breakfast.

'We got it, though—everything except foxes. Have you seen May Queen's nose ?' said the Inspector.

'And Mystery's dead. We'll keep 'em coupled next time till we get well in among the crops. I say, what a babbling body-snatcher that Beagle-boy is ! Ought to be drowned !'

'They bury people so dam' casual hereabouts. Give him another chance,' the Inspector pleaded, not knowing that he should live to repent most bitterly.

'Talkin' of chances,' said the Governor, 'this Sheikh lies about his barley bein' a failure. If it's high enough to hide a hound at this time of year, it's all right. And he wants a fifty per cent remission, you said?'

'You didn't go on past the melon patch where I tried to turn Wanderer. It's all burned up from there on to the desert. His other waterwheel has broken down, too,' the Inspector replied.

'Very good. We'll split the difference and allow him twenty-five per cent off. Where'll we meet to-morrow?'

'There's some trouble among the villages down the river about their land-titles. It's good goin' ground there, too,' the Inspector said.

The next meet, then, was some twenty miles down the river, and the pack were not enlarged till they were fairly among the fields. Abu Hussein was there in force—four of him. Four delirious hunts of four minutes each—four hounds per fox—ended in four earths just above the river. All the village looked on.

'We forgot about the earths. The banks are riddled with 'em. This'll defeat us,' said the Inspector.

'Wait a moment!' The Governor drew forth a sneezing hound. 'I've just remembered I'm Governor of these parts.'

'Then turn out a black battalion to stop for us. We'll need 'em, old man.'



The Governor straightened his back. 'Give ear, O people !' he cried. 'I make a new Law !'

The villagers closed in. He called :—

'Henceforward I will give one dollar to the man on whose land Abu Hussein is found. And another dollar'—he held up the coin—'to the man on whose land these dogs shall kill him. But to the man on whose land Abu Hussein shall run into a hole such as is this hole, I will give not dollars, but a most unmeasurable beating. Is it understood ?'

'Our Excellency,' a man stepped forth, 'on my land Abu Hussein was found this morning. Is it not so, brothers ?'

None denied. The Governor tossed him over four dollars without a word.

'On my land they all went into their holes,' cried another. 'Therefore I must be beaten.'

'Not so. The land is mine, and mine are the beatings.'

This second speaker thrust forward his shoulders already bared, and the villagers shouted.

'Hullo ! Two men anxious to be licked ? There must be some swindle about the land,' said the Governor. Then in the local vernacular : 'What are your rights to the beating ?'

As a river-reach changes beneath a slant of the sun, that which had been a scattered mob changed to a court of most ancient justice. The hounds tore and sobbed at Abu Hussein's hearthstone, all unnoticed among the legs of the witnesses, and Gihon, also accustomed to laws, purred approval.

'You will not wait till the Judges come up the river to settle the dispute ?' said the Governor at last.

‘No !’ shouted all the village save the man who had first asked to be beaten. ‘We will abide by Our Excellency’s decision. Let Our Excellency turn out the creatures of the Emirs who stole our land in the days of the Oppression.’

‘And thou sayest ?’ the Governor turned to the man who had first asked to be beaten.

‘I say *I* will wait till the wise Judges come down in the steamer. Then I will bring my many witnesses,’ he replied.

‘He is rich. He will bring many witnesses,’ the village Sheikh muttered.

‘No need. Thy own mouth condemns thee !’ the Governor cried. ‘No man lawfully entitled to his land would wait one hour before entering upon it. Stand aside !’ The man fell back, and the village jeered him.

The second claimant stooped quickly beneath the lifted hunting-crop. The village rejoiced.

‘Oh, Such an one ; Son of such an one,’ said the Governor, prompted by the Sheikh, ‘learn, from the day when I send the order, to block up all the holes where Abu Hussein may hide—on—thy—land !’

The light flicks ended. The man stood up triumphant. By that accolade had the Supreme Government acknowledged his title before all men.

While the village praised the perspicacity of the Governor, a naked, pock-marked child strode forward to the earth, and stood on one leg, unconcerned as a young stork.

‘Ha !’ he said, hands behind his back. ‘This should be blocked up with bundles of dhurra-stalks—or, better, bundles of thorns.’

'Better thorns,' said the Governor. 'Thick ends innermost.'

The child nodded gravely and squatted on the sand.

'An evil day for thee, Abu Hussein,' he shrilled into the mouth of the earth. 'A day of obstacles to thy flagitious returns in the morning.'

'Who is it?' the Governor asked the Sheikh. 'It thinks.'

'Farag the Fatherless. His people were slain in the days of the Oppression. The man to whom Our Excellency has awarded the land is, as it were, his maternal uncle.'

'Will it come with me and feed the big dogs?' said the Governor.

The other peering children drew back. 'Run!' they cried. 'Our Excellency will feed Farag to the big dogs.'

'I will come,' said Farag. 'And I will never go.' He threw his arm round Royal's neck, and the wise beast licked his face.

'Binjamin, by Jove!' the Inspector cried.

'No!' said the Governor. 'I believe he has the makings of a James Pigg!'

Farag waved his hand to his uncle, and led Royal on to the barge. The rest of the pack followed.

Gihon, that had seen many sports, learned to know the Hunt barge well. He met her rounding his bends on grey December dawns to music wild and lamentable as the almost forgotten throb of Dervish drums, when, high above Royal's tenor bell, sharper even than lying Beagle-boy's falsetto break, Farag chanted deathless war against Abu Hussein and all

his seed. At sunrise the river would shoulder her carefully into her place, and listen to the rush and scutter of the pack fleeing up the gang-plank, and the tramp of the Governor's Arab behind them. They would pass over the brow into the dewless crops where Gihon, low and shrunken, could only guess what they were about when Abu Hussein flew down the bank to scratch at a stopped earth, and flew back into the barley again. As Farag had foretold, it was evil days for Abu Hussein ere he learned to take the necessary steps and to get away crisply. Sometimes Gihon saw the whole procession of the hunt silhouetted against the morning-blue, bearing him company for many merry miles. At every half mile the horses and the donkeys jumped the water-channels—up, on, change your leg, and off again—like figures in a zoetrope, till they grew small along the line of waterwheels. Then Gihon waited their rustling return through the crops, and took them to rest on his bosom at ten o'clock. While the horses ate, and Farag slept with his head on Royal's flank, the Governor and his Inspector worked for the good of the Hunt and his Province.

After a little time there was no need to beat any man for neglecting his earths. The steamer's destination was telegraphed from waterwheel to waterwheel, and the villagers stopped out and put to according. If an earth were overlooked, it meant some dispute as to the ownership of the land, and then and there the Hunt checked and settled it in this wise : the Governor and the Inspector side by side, but the latter half a horse's length to the rear ; both bare-shouldered claimants well in front ; the

villagers half-mooned behind them, and Farag with the pack, who quite understood the performance, sitting down on the left. Twenty minutes were enough to settle the most complicated case, for, as the Governor said to a Judge on the steamer, 'One gets at the truth in a hunting-field a heap quicker than in your law-courts.'

'But when the evidence is conflicting?' the Judge suggested.

'Watch the field. They'll throw tongue fast enough if you're running a wrong scent. You've never had an appeal from one of my decisions yet.'

The Sheikhs on horseback—the lesser folk on clever donkeys—the children so despised by Farag—soon understood that villages which repaired their waterwheels and channels stood highest in the Governor's favour. He bought their barley for his horses.

'Channels,' he said, 'are necessary that we may all jump them. They are necessary, moreover, for the crops. Let there be many wheels and sound channels—and much good barley.'

'Without money,' replied an aged Sheikh, 'there are no waterwheels.'

'I will lend the money,' said the Governor.

'At what interest, O Our Excellency?'

'Take you two of May Queen's puppies to bring up in your village in such a manner that they do not eat filth, nor lose their hair, nor catch fever from lying in the sun, but become wise hounds.'

'Like Ray-yal—not like Bigglebai?' (already it was an insult along the river to compare a man to the shifty anthropophagous blue-mottled harrier).

‘Certainly, like Ray-yal—not in the least like Bigglebai. *That* shall be the interest on the loan. Let the puppies thrive and the waterwheel be built, and I shall be content,’ said the Governor.

‘The wheel shall be built, but, O Our Excellency, if by God’s favour the pups grow to be well-smellers, not filth-eaters, not unaccustomed to their names, not lawless, who will do them and me justice at the time of judging the young dogs?’

‘Hounds, man, hounds! Ha-wands, O Sheikh, we call them in their manhood.’

‘The ha-wands when they are judged at the Sha-ho. I have unfriends down the river to whom Our Excellency has also entrusted ha-wands to bring up.’

‘Puppies, man! Pah-peaz, we call them, O Sheikh, in their childhood.’

‘Pah-peaz. My enemies may judge my pah-peaz unjustly at the Sha-ho. This must be thought of.’

‘I see the obstacle. Hear now! If the new waterwheel is built in a month without oppression, thou, O Sheikh, shalt be named one of the judges to judge the pah-peaz at the Sha-ho. Is it understood?’

‘Understood. We will build the wheel. I and my seed are responsible for the repayment of the loan. Where are my pah-peaz? If they eat fowls, must they on any account eat the feathers?’

‘On no account must they eat the feathers. Farag in the barge will tell thee how they are to live.’

There is no instance of any default on the Governor’s personal and unauthorised loans, for which they called him the Father of Waterwheels. But the first puppy-show at the capital needed enormous tact and

the presence of a black battalion ostentatiously drilling in the barrack square to prevent trouble after the prize-giving.

But who can chronicle the glories of the Gihon Hunt—or their shames? Who remembers the kill in the market-place, when the Governor bade the assembled Sheikhs and warriors observe how the hounds would instantly devour the body of Abu Hussein; but how, when he had scientifically broken it up, the weary pack turned from it in loathing, and Farag wept because he said the world's face had been blackened? What men who have not yet ridden beyond the sound of any horn recall the midnight run which ended—Beagle-boy leading—among tombs; the hasty whip-off, and the oath, taken above bones, to forget the worry? The desert run, when Abu Hussein forsook the cultivation, and made a six-mile point to earth in a desolate khor—when strange armed riders on camels swooped out of a ravine, and instead of giving battle, offered to take the tired hounds home on their beasts. Which they did, and vanished.

Above all, who remembers the death of Royal, when a certain Sheikh wept above the body of the stainless hound as it might have been his son's—and that day the Hunt rode no more? The badly-kept log-book says little of this, but at the end of their second season (forty-nine brace) appears the dark entry: 'New blood badly wanted. They are beginning to listen to Beagle-boy.'

The Inspector attended to the matter when his leave fell due.

‘Remember,’ said the Governor, ‘you must get us the best blood in England—real, dainty hounds—expense no object, but don’t trust your own judgment. Present my letters of introduction, and take what they give you.’

The Inspector presented his letters in a society where they make much of horses, more of hounds, and are tolerably civil to men who can ride. They passed him from house to house, mounted him according to his merits, and fed him, after five years of goat chop and Worcester sauce, perhaps a thought too richly.

The seat or castle where he made his great coup does not much matter. Four Masters of Foxhounds were at table, and in a mellow hour the Inspector told them stories of the Gihon Hunt. He ended : ‘Ben said I wasn’t to trust my own judgment about hounds, but *I* think there ought to be a special tariff for Empire-makers.’

As soon as his host could speak, they reassured him on this point.

‘And now tell us about your first puppy-show all over again,’ said one.

‘And about the earth-stoppin’. Was that all Ben’s own invention?’ said another.

‘Wait a moment,’ said a large, clean-shaven man—not an M.F.H.—at the end of the table. ‘Are your villagers habitually beaten by your Governor when they fail to stop foxes’ holes?’

The tone and the phrase were enough even if, as the Inspector confessed afterwards, the big, blue double-chinned man had not looked so like Beagle-boy. He took him on for the honour of Ethiopia.



'We only hunt twice a week—sometimes three times. I've never known a man chastised more than four times a week—unless there's a bye.'

The large loose-lipped man flung his napkin down, came round the table, cast himself into the chair next the Inspector, and leaned forward earnestly, so that he breathed in the Inspector's face.

'Chastised with what?' he said.

'With the *kourbash*—on the feet. A *kourbash* is a strip of old hippo-hide with a sort of keel on it, like the cutting edge of a boar's tusk. But we use the rounded side for a first offender.'

'And do any consequences follow this sort of thing? For the victim, I mean—not for you?'

'Ve-ry rarely. Let me be fair. I've never seen a man die under the lash, but gangrene may set up if the *kourbash* has been pickled.'

'Pickled in what?' All the table was still and interested.

'In copperas, of course. Didn't you know *that*?' said the Inspector.

'Thank God I didn't.' The large man sputtered visibly.

The Inspector wiped his face and grew bolder.

'You mustn't think we're careless about our earth-stoppers. We've a Hunt fund for hot tar. Tar's a splendid dressing if the toe-nails aren't beaten off. But huntin' as large a country as we do, we mayn't be back at that village for a month, and if the dressings ain't renewed, and gangrene sets in, often as not you find your man pegging about on his stumps. We've a well-known local name for 'em down the river. We call 'em the Mudir's Cranes.

You see, I persuaded the Governor only to bastinado on one foot.'

'On one foot? The Mudir's Cranes!' The large man turned purple to the top of his bald head. 'Would you mind giving me the local word for Mudir's Cranes?'

From a too well stocked memory the Inspector drew one short adhesive word which surprises by itself even unblushing Ethiopia. He spelt it out, saw the large man write it down on his cuff and withdraw. Then the Inspector translated a few of its significations and implications to the four Masters of Foxhounds. He left three days later with eight couple of the best hounds in England—a free and a friendly and an ample gift from four packs to the Gihon Hunt. He had honestly meant to undeceive the large blue-mottled man, but somehow forgot about it.

The new draft marks a new chapter in the Hunt's history. From an isolated phenomenon in a barge it became a permanent institution with brick-built kennels ashore, and an influence social, political, and administrative, co-terminous with the boundaries of the province. Ben, the Governor, departed to England, where he kept a pack of real dainty hounds, but never ceased to long for the old lawless lot. His successors were *ex-officio* Masters of the Gihon Hunt, as all Inspectors were Whips. For one reason, Farag, the kennel huntsman, in khaki and puttees, would obey nothing under the rank of an Excellency, and the hounds would obey no one but Farag; for another, the best way of estimating crop returns and revenue was by riding straight to hounds; for a third, though Judges down the river issued signed

and sealed land-titles to all lawful owners, yet public opinion along the river never held any such title valid till it had been confirmed, according to precedent, by the Governor's hunting-crop in the hunting-field, above the wilfully neglected earth. True, the ceremony had been cut down to three mere taps on the shoulder, but Governors who tried to evade that much found themselves and their office compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses who took up their time with lawsuits and, worse still, neglected the puppies. The older Sheikhs, indeed, stood out for the unmeasurable beatings of the old days—the sharper the punishment, they argued, the surer the title ; but here the hand of modern progress was against them, and they contented themselves with telling tales of Ben the first Governor, whom they called the Father of Waterwheels, and of that heroic age when men, horses, and hounds were worth following.

This same Modern Progress which brought dog biscuit and brass water-taps to the kennels was at work all over the world. Forces, Activities, and Movements sprang into being, agitated themselves, coalesced, and, in one political avalanche, overwhelmed a bewildered, and not in the least intending it, England. The echoes of the New Era were borne into the Province on the wings of inexplicable cables. The Gihon Hunt read speeches and sentiments, and policies which amazed them, and they thanked God, prematurely, that their Province was too far off, too hot, and too hard-worked to be reached by those speakers or their policies. But they, with others, underestimated the scope and purpose of the New Era.

One by one, the Provinces of the Empire were hauled up and baited, hit and held, lashed under the belly, and forced back on their haunches for the amusement of their new masters in the parish of Westminster. One by one they fell away, sore and angry, to compare stripes with each other at the ends of the uneasy earth. Even so the Gihon Hunt, like Abu Hussein in the old days, did not understand. Then it reached them through the Press that they habitually flogged to death good revenue-paying cultivators who neglected to stop earths ; but that the few, the very few, who did not die under hippohide whips soaked in copperas, walked about on their gangrenous ankle-bones, and were known in derision as the Mudir's Cranes. The charges were vouched for in the House of Commons by a Mr. Lethabie Groombride, who had formed a Committee, and was disseminating literature. The Province groaned ; the Inspector—now an Inspector of Inspectors—whistled. He had forgotten the gentleman who sputtered in people's faces.

‘He shouldn't have looked so like Beagle-boy !’ was his sole defence when he met the Governor at breakfast on the steamer after a meet.

‘You shouldn't have joked with an animal of that class,’ said Peter the Governor. ‘Look what Farag has brought me !’

It was a pamphlet, signed on behalf of a Committee by a lady secretary, but composed by some person who thoroughly understood the language of the Province. After telling the tale of the beatings, it recommended all the beaten to institute criminal proceedings against their Governor, and, as soon as

might be, to rise against English oppression and tyranny. Such documents were new in Ethiopia in those days.

The Inspector read the last half-page. 'But—but,' he stammered, 'this is impossible. White men don't write this sort of stuff.'

'Don't they, just?' said the Governor. 'They get made Cabinet Ministers for doing it too. I went home last year. I know.'

'It'll blow over,' said the Inspector weakly.

'Not it. Groombride is coming down here to investigate the matter in a few days.'

'For himself?'

'The Imperial Government's behind him. Perhaps you'd like to look at my orders.' The Governor laid down an uncoded cable. The whip-lash to it ran: 'You will afford Mr. Groombride every facility for his inquiry, and will be held responsible that no obstacles are put in his way to the fullest possible examination of any witnesses which he may consider necessary. He will be accompanied by his own interpreter, who must not be tampered with.'

'That's to me—Governor of the Province!' said Peter the Governor.

'It seems about enough,' the Inspector answered.

Farag, kennel-huntsman, entered the saloon, as was his privilege.

'My uncle, who was beaten by the Father of Waterwheels, would approach, O Excellency,' he said, 'and there are others on the bank.'

'Admit,' said the Governor.

There tramped aboard Sheikhs and villagers to the number of seventeen. In each man's hand was a

copy of the pamphlet ; in each man's eye terror and uneasiness of the sort that Governors spend and are spent to clear away. Farag's uncle, now Sheikh of the village, spoke : 'It is written in this book, O Excellency, that the beatings whereby we hold our lands are all valueless. It is written that every man who received such a beating from the Father of Waterwheels who slew the Emirs, should instantly begin a lawsuit, because the title to his land is not valid.'

'It is so written. We do not wish lawsuits. We wish to hold the land as it was given to us after the days of the Oppression,' they cried.

The Governor glanced at the Inspector. This was serious. To cast doubt on the ownership of land means, in Ethiopia, the letting in of waters, and the getting out of troops.

'Your titles are good,' said the Governor. The Inspector confirmed with a nod.

'Then what is the meaning of these writings which come from down the river where the Judges are ?' Farag's uncle waved his copy. 'By whose order are we ordered to slay you, O Excellency Our Governor ?'

'It is not written that you are to slay me.'

'Not in those very words, but if we leave an earth unstopped, it is the same as though we wished to save Abu Hussein from the hounds. These writings say : "Abolish your rulers." How can we abolish except we kill ? We hear rumours of one who comes from down the river soon to lead us to kill.'

'Fools !' said the Governor. 'Your titles are good. This is madness !'

‘It is so written,’ they answered like a pack.

‘Listen,’ said the Inspector smoothly. ‘I know who caused the writings to be written and sent. He is a man of a blue-mottled jowl, in aspect like Biggle-bai who ate unclean matters. He will come up the river and will give tongue about the beatings.’

‘Will he impeach our land-titles? An evil day for him!’

‘Go slow, Baker,’ the Governor whispered. ‘They’ll kill him if they get scared about their land.’

‘I tell a parable.’ The Inspector lit a cigarette. ‘Declare which of you took to walk the children of Milkmaid?’

‘Melik-meid First or Second?’ said Farag quickly.

‘The second—the one which was lamed by the thorn.’

‘No—no. Melik-meid the Second strained her shoulder leaping my water-channel,’ a Sheikh cried. ‘Melik-meid the First was lamed by the thorns on the day when Our Excellency fell thrice.’

‘True—true. The second Melik-meid’s mate was Malvolio, the pied hound,’ said the Inspector.

‘I had two of the second Melik-meid’s pups,’ said Farag’s uncle. ‘They died of the madness in their ninth month.’

‘And how did they do before they died?’ said the Inspector.

‘They ran about in the sun and slavered at the mouth till they died.’

‘Wherefore?’

‘God knows. He sent the madness. It was no fault of mine.’

'Thy own mouth hath answered thee.' The Inspector laughed. 'It is with men as it is with dogs. God afflicts some with a madness. It is no fault of ours if such men run about in the sun and froth at the mouth. The man who is coming will emit spray from his mouth in speaking, and will always edge and push in towards his hearers. When ye see and hear him ye will understand that he is afflicted of God : being mad. He is in God's hands.'

'But our titles—are our titles to our lands good ?' the crowd repeated.

'Your titles are in my hands—they are good,' said the Governor.

'And he who wrote the writings is an afflicted of God ?' said Farag's uncle.

'The Inspector hath said it,' cried the Governor. 'Ye will see when the man comes. O Sheikhs and men, have we ridden together and walked puppies together, and bought and sold barley for the horses—that after these years we should run riot on the scent of a madman—an afflicted of God ?'

'But the Hunt pays us to kill mad jackals,' said Farag's uncle. 'And he who questions my titles to my land——'

'Aahh ! 'Ware riot !' The Governor's hunting-crop cracked like a three-pounder. 'By Allah,' he thundered, 'if the afflicted of God come to any harm at your hands, I myself will shoot every hound and every puppy, and the Hunt shall ride no more. On your heads be it. Go in peace, and tell the others.'

'The Hunt shall ride no more,' said Farag's uncle. 'Then how can the land be governed ? No—no, O



Excellency Our Governor, we will not harm a hair on the head of the afflicted of God. He shall be to us as is Abu Hussein's wife in the breeding season.'

When they were gone the Governor mopped his forehead.

'We must put a few soldiers in every village this Groombride visits, Baker. Tell 'em to keep out of sight, and have an eye on the villagers. He's trying 'em rather high.'

'O Excellency,' said the smooth voice of Farag, laying the *Field and Country Life* square on the table, 'is the afflicted of God who resembles Bigglebai one with the man whom the Inspector met in the great house in England, and to whom he told the tale of the Mudir's Cranes?'

'The same man, Farag,' said the Inspector.

'I have often heard the Inspector tell the tale to Our Excellency at feeding-time in the kennels; but since I am in the Government service I have never told it to my people. May I loose that tale among the villages?'

The Governor nodded. 'No harm,' said he.

The details of Mr. Groombride's arrival, with his interpreter, who, he proposed, should eat with him at the Governor's table, his allocution to the Governor on the New Movement, and the sins of Imperialism, I purposely omit. At three in the afternoon Mr. Groombride said: 'I will go out now and address your victims in this village.'

'Won't you find it rather hot?' said the Governor. 'They generally take a nap till sunset at this time of year.'

Mr. Groombride's large, loose lips set. 'That,' he replied pointedly, 'would be enough to decide me. I fear you have not quite mastered your instructions. May I ask you to send for my interpreter? I hope he has not been tampered with by your subordinates.'

He was a yellowish boy called Abdul, who had well eaten and drunk with Farag. The Inspector, by the way, was not present at the meal.

'At whatever risk, I shall go unattended,' said Mr. Groombride. 'Your presence would cow them from giving evidence. Abdul, my good friend, would you very kindly open the umbrella?'

He passed up the gang-plank to the village, and with no more prelude than a Salvation Army picket in a Portsmouth slum, cried: 'Oh, my brothers!'

He did not guess how his path had been prepared. The village was widely awake. Farag, in loose, flowing garments, quite unlike a kennel-huntsman's khaki and puttees, leaned against the wall of his uncle's house. 'Come and see the afflicted of God,' he cried musically, 'whose face, indeed, resembles that of Bigglebai.'

The village came, and decided that on the whole Farag was right.

'I can't quite catch what they are saying,' said Mr. Groombride.

'They saying they very much pleased to see you, sar,' Abdul interpreted.

'Then I do think they might have sent a deputation to the steamer; but I suppose they were frightened of the officials. Tell them not to be frightened, Abdul.'

'He says you are not to be frightened,' Abdul

explained. A child here sputtered with laughter. 'Refrain from mirth,' Farag cried. 'The afflicted of God is the guest of The Excellency Our Governor. We are responsible for every hair of his head.'

'He has none,' a voice spoke. 'He has the white and the shining mange.'

'Now tell them what I have come for, Abdul, and please keep the umbrella well up. I think I shall reserve myself for my little vernacular speech at the end.'

'Approach ! Look ! Listen !' Abdul chanted. 'The afflicted of God will now make sport. Presently he will speak in your tongue, and will consume you with mirth. I have been his servant for three weeks. I will tell you about his undergarments and his perfumes for his head.'

He told them at length.

'And didst thou take any of his perfume bottles ?' said Farag at the end.

'I am his servant. I took two,' Abdul replied.

'Ask him,' said Farag's uncle, 'what he knows about our land-titles. Ye young men are all alike.' He waved a pamphlet. Mr. Groombride smiled to see how the seed sown in London had borne fruit by Gihon. Lo ! All the seniors held copies of the pamphlet.

'He knows less than a buffalo. He told me on the steamer that he was driven out of his own land by Demah-Kerazi, which is a devil inhabiting crowds and assemblies,' said Abdul.

'Allah between us and evil !' a woman cackled from the darkness of a hut. 'Come in, children, he may have the Evil Eye.'

‘No, my aunt,’ said Farag. ‘No afflicted of God has an evil eye. Wait till ye hear his mirth-provoking speech which he will deliver. I have heard it twice from Abdul.’

‘They seem very quick to grasp the point. How far have you got, Abdul?’

‘All about the beatings, sar. They are highly interested.’

‘Don’t forget about the local self-government, and please hold the umbrella over me. It is hopeless to destroy unless one first builds up.’

‘He may not have the Evil Eye,’ Farag’s uncle grunted, ‘but his devil led him too certainly to question my land-title. Ask him whether he still doubts my land-title?’

‘Or mine, or mine?’ cried the elders.

‘What odds? He is an afflicted of God,’ Farag called. ‘Remember the tale I told you.’

‘Yes, but he is an Englishman, and doubtless of influence, or Our Excellency would not entertain him. Bid the down-country jackass ask him.’

‘Sar,’ said Abdul, ‘these people, much fearing they may be turned out of their land in consequence of your remarks. Therefore they ask you to make promise no bad consequences following your visit.’

Mr. Groombridge held his breath and turned purple. Then he stamped his foot.

‘Tell them,’ he cried, ‘that if a hair of any one of their heads is touched by any official on any account whatever, all England shall ring with it. Good God! What callous oppression! The dark places of the earth are full of cruelty.’ He wiped his face, and throwing out his arms cried: ‘Tell them, oh! tell

the poor serfs not to be afraid of me. Tell them I come to redress their wrongs—not, heaven knows, to add to their burden.'

The long-drawn gurgle of the practised public speaker pleased them much.

'That is how the new water-tap runs out in the kennel,' said Farag. 'The Excellency Our Governor entertains him that he may make sport. Make him say the mirth-moving speech.'

'What did he say about my land-titles?' Farag's uncle was not to be turned.

'He says,' Farag interpreted, 'that he desires nothing better than that you should live on your lands in peace. He talks as though he believed himself to be Governor.'

'Well. We here are all witnesses to what he has said. Now go forward with the sport.' Farag's uncle smoothed his garments. 'How diversely hath Allah made His creatures! On one He bestows strength to slay Emirs; another He causes to go mad and wander in the sun, like the afflicted sons of Melik-meid.'

'Yes, and to emit spray from the mouth, as the Inspector told us. All will happen as the Inspector foretold,' said Farag. 'I have never yet seen the Inspector thrown out during any run.'

'I think,' Abdul plucked at Mr. Groombride's sleeves, 'I think perhaps it is better now, sar, if you give your fine little native speech. They not understanding English, but much pleased at your condescensions.'

'Condescensions?' Mr. Groombride spun round. 'If they only knew how I felt towards them in my

heart ! If I could express a tithe of my feelings ! I must stay here and learn the language. Hold up the umbrella, Abdul ! I think my little speech will show them I know something of their *vie intime*.'

It was a short, simple, carefully-learned address, and the accent, supervised by Abdul on the steamer, allowed the hearers to guess its meaning, which was a request to see one of the Mudir's Cranes ; since the desire of the speaker's life, the object to which he would consecrate his days, was to improve the condition of the Mudir's Cranes. But first he must behold them with his own eyes. Would, then, his brethren, whom he loved, show him a Mudir's Crane whom he desired to love ?

Once, twice, and again in his peroration he repeated his demand, using always—that they might see he was acquainted with their local argot—using always, I say, the word which the Inspector had given him in England long ago—the short adhesive word which, by itself, surprises even unblushing Ethiopia.

There are limits to the sublime politeness of an ancient people. A bulky, blue-chinned man in white clothes, his name red-lettered across his lower shirt-front, spluttering from under a green-lined umbrella almost tearful appeals to be introduced to the Unintroducible ; naming loudly the Unnameable ; dancing, as it seemed, in perverse joy at mere mention of the Unmentionable—found those limits. There was a moment's hush, and then such mirth as Gihon through his centuries had never heard—a roar like to the roar of his own cataracts in flood. Children cast themselves on the ground, and rolled back and forth cheering and whooping ; strong men, their

faces hidden in their clothes, swayed in silence, till the agony became insupportable, and they threw up their heads and bayed at the sun ; women, mothers and virgins, shrilled shriek upon mounting shriek, and slapped their thighs as it might have been the roll of musketry. When they tried to draw breath, some half-strangled voice would quack out the word, and the riot began afresh. Last to fall was the city-trained Abdul. He held on to the edge of apoplexy, then collapsed, throwing the umbrella from him.

Mr. Groombride should not be judged too harshly. Exercise and strong emotion under a hot sun, the shock of public ingratitude, for the moment ruffled his spirit. He furled the umbrella, and with it beat the prostrate Abdul, crying that he had been betrayed.

In which posture, the Inspector, on horseback, followed by the Governor, suddenly found him.

‘That’s all very well,’ said the Inspector, when he had taken Abdul’s dramatically dying depositions on the steamer, ‘but you can’t hammer a native merely because he laughs at you. I see nothing for it but the law to take its course.’

‘You might reduce the charge to—er—tampering with an interpreter,’ said the Governor. Mr. Groombride was too far gone to be comforted.

‘It’s the publicity that I fear,’ he wailed. ‘Is there no possible means of hushing up the affair? You don’t know what a question—a single question in the House means to a man of my position—the ruin of my political career, I assure you.’

‘I shouldn’t have imagined it,’ said the Governor thoughtfully.

‘ And, though perhaps I ought not to say it, I am not without honour in my own country—or influence. A word in season, as you know, Your Excellency. It might carry an official far.’

The Governor shuddered.

‘ Yes, that had to come too,’ he said to himself. ‘ Well, look here. If I tell this man of yours to withdraw the charge against you, you can go to Gehenna for aught I care. The only condition I make is, that if you write—I suppose that’s part of your business—about your travels, you don’t praise *me* !’

So far Mr. Groombridge has loyally adhered to this understanding.



## MY LORD THE ELEPHANT

'Less you want your toes trod off you'd better get back at once,  
For the bullocks are walkin' two by two,  
The *byles* are walkin' two by two,  
The bullocks are walkin' two by two,  
An' the elephants bring the guns !

Ho ! Yuss !

Great—big—long—black forty-pounder guns :

Jiggery-jolty to and fro,

Each as big as a launch in tow—

Blind—dumb—broad-breeched beggars o' batterin' guns !

*Barrack-Room Ballad.*

TOUCHING the truth of this tale there need be no doubt at all, for it was told to me by Mulvaney at the back of the elephant-lines, one warm evening when we were taking the dogs out for exercise. The twelve Government elephants rocked at their pickets outside the big mud-walled stables (one arch, as wide as a bridge-arch, to each restless beast), and the mahouts were preparing the evening meal. Now and again some impatient youngster would smell the cooking flour-cakes and squeal ; and the naked little children of the elephant-lines would strut down the row shouting and commanding silence, or, reaching up, would slap at the eager trunks. Then the elephants feigned to be deeply interested in pouring dust upon their heads, but, so soon as the children

passed, the rocking, fidgeting, and muttering broke out again.

The sunset was dying, and the elephants heaved and swayed dead black against the one sheet of rose-red low down in the dusty grey sky. It was at the beginning of the hot weather, just after the troops had changed into their white clothes, so Mulvaney and Ortheris looked like ghosts walking through the dusk. Learoyd had gone off to another barrack to buy sulphur ointment for his last dog under suspicion of mange, and with delicacy had put his kennel into quarantine at the back of the furnace where they cremate the anthrax cases.

'You wouldn't like mange, little woman?' said Ortheris, turning my terrier over on her fat white back with his foot. 'You're no end bloomin' par-tic'lar, you are. 'Oo wouldn't take no notice o' me t'other day 'cause she was goin' 'ome all alone in 'er dorg-cart, eh? Settin' on the box-seat like a bloomin' little tart, you was, Vicy. Now you run along an' make them 'uttees 'oller. Sick 'em, Vicy, loo!'

Elephants loathe little dogs. Vixen barked herself down the pickets, and in a minute all the elephants were kicking and squealing and clucking together.

'Oh, you soldier-men,' said a mahout angrily, 'call off your she-dog. She is frightening our elephant-folk.'

'Rummy beggars!' said Ortheris meditatively. ''Call 'em people, same as if they was. An' they are too. Not so bloomin' rummy when you come to think of it, neither.'

Vixen returned, yapping to show that she could do

it again if she liked, and established herself between Ortheris's knees, smiling a large smile at his lawful dogs who dared not fly at her.

'Seed the battery this mornin'?' said Ortheris. He meant the newly-arrived elephant-battery; otherwise he would have said simply 'guns.' Three elephants harnessed tandem go to each gun, and those who have not seen the big forty-pounders of position trundling along in the wake of their gigantic team have yet something to behold. The lead-elephant had behaved very badly on parade; had been cut loose, sent back to the lines in disgrace, and was at that hour squealing and lashing out with his trunk at the end of the line; a picture of blind, bound, bad temper. His mahout, standing clear of the flail-like blows, was trying to soothe him.

'That's the beggar that cut up on p'rade. 'E's *must*,' said Ortheris pointing. 'There'll be murder in the lines soon, and then, per'aps, 'e'll get loose an' we'll 'ave to be turned out to shoot 'im, same as when one o' they native kings' elephants *musted* last June. 'Ope 'e will.'

'*Must* be sugared!' said Mulvaney contemptuously from his resting-place on the pile of dried bedding. 'He's no more than in a powerful bad timper wid bein' put upon. I'd lay my kit he's new to the gun-team, an' by natur' he hates haulin'. Ask the mahout, sorr.'

I hailed the old white-bearded mahout who was lavishing pet words on his sulky red-eyed charge.

'He is not *musth*,' the man replied indignantly; 'only his honour has been touched. Is an elephant an ox or a mule that he should tug at a trace? His

strength is in his head—Peace, peace, my Lord ! It was not *my* fault that they yoked thee this morning !—Only a low-caste elephant will pull a gun, and *he* is a Kumeria of the Doon. It cost a year and the life of a man to break him to burden. They of the Artillery put him in the gun-team because one of their base-born brutes had gone lame. No wonder that he was, and is wrath.’

‘Rummy ! Most unusual rum,’ said Ortheris. ‘Gawd, ’e is in a temper, though ! S’pose ’e got loose !’

Mulvaney began to speak but checked himself, and I asked the mahout what would happen if the heel-chains broke.

‘God knows, Who made elephants,’ he said simply. ‘In his now state peradventure he might kill you three, or run at large till his rage abated. He would not kill me except he were *musth*. Then would he kill me before any one in the world, because he loves me. Such is the custom of the elephant-folk ; and the custom of us mahout-people matches it for foolishness. We trust each our own elephant, till our own elephant kills us. Other castes trust women, but we the elephant-folk. I have seen men deal with enraged elephants and live ; but never was man yet born of woman that met my lord the elephant in his *musth* and lived to tell of the taming. They are enough bold who meet him angry.’

I translated. Then said Terence : ‘Ask the heathen if he iver saw a man tame an elephint,—anyways—a white man.’

‘Once,’ said the mahout, ‘I saw a man astride of such a beast in the town of Cawnpore ; a bare-headed

man, a white man, beating it upon the head with a gun. It was said he was possessed of devils or drunk.'

'Is ut like, think you, he'd be doin' it sober?' said Mulvaney after interpretation, and the chained elephant roared.

'There's only one man top of earth that would be the partic'lar kind o' sorter bloomin' fool to do it!' said Ortheris. 'When was that, Mulvaney?'

'As the naygur sez, in Cawnpore; an' I was that fool—in the days av my youth. But it came about as naturil as wan thing leads to another,—me an' the elephint, and the elephint and me; an' the fight betune us was the most naturil av all.'

'That's just wot it would ha' been,' said Ortheris. 'Only you must ha' been more than usual full. You done one queer trick with an elephant that I know of, why didn't you never tell us the other one?'

'Bekase, onless you had heard the naygur here say what he has said spontaneous, you'd ha' called me for a liar, Stanley, my son, an' it would ha' bin my juty an' my delight to give you the father an' mother av a beltin'! There's only wan fault about you, little man, an' that's thinking you know all there is in the world, an' a little more. 'Tis a fault that has made away wid a few orf'cers I've served undher, not to spake av ivry man but two that I iver thried to make into a privit.'

'Ho!' said Ortheris with ruffled plumes, 'an' 'oo was your two bloomin' little Sir Garnets, eh?'

'Wan was mesilf,' said Mulvaney with a grin that darkness could not hide; 'an'—seein' that he's not here there's no harm speakin' av him—t'other was Jock.'

'Jock's no more than a 'ayrick in trousers. 'E be'aves *like* one ; an' 'e can't 'it one at a 'undred ; 'e was born *on* one, an' s'welp me 'e'll die *under* one for not bein' able to say wot 'e wants in a Christian lingo,' said Ortheris, jumping up from the piled fodder only to be swept off his legs. Vixen leaped upon his stomach, and the other dogs followed and sat down there.

'I know what Jock is like,' I said. 'I want to hear about the elephant, though.'

'It's another o' Mulvaney's bloomin' panoramas,' said Ortheris, gasping under the dogs. 'Im an' Jock for the 'ole bloomin' British Army ! You'll be sayin' you won Waterloo next,—you an' Jock. Garn !'

Neither of us thought it worth while to notice Ortheris. The big gun-elephant threshed and muttered in his chains, giving tongue now and again in crashing trumpet-peals, and to this accompaniment Terence went on : 'In the beginnin',' said he, 'me bein' what I was, there was a misunderstandin' wid my sargint that was then. He put his spite on me for various reasons,'—

The deep-set eyes twinkled above the glow of the pipe-bowl, and Ortheris grunted, 'Another petticoat !'

—'For various an' promiscuous reasons ; an' the upshot av it was that he come into barricks wan afternoon whin' I was settlin' my cowlick before goin' walkin', called me a big baboon (which I was not), an' a demoralisin' beggar (which I was), an' bid me go on fatigue thin an' there, helpin' shift E. P. tents, fourteen av thim from the rest-camps. At that, me bein' set on my walk—'

'Ah!' from under the dogs, 'e's a Mormon, Vic. Don't you 'ave nothin' to do with 'im, little dorg.'

—'Set on my walk, I tould him a few things that came up in my mind, an' wan thing led on to another, an' betune talkin' I made time for to hit the nose av him so that he'd be no Venus to any woman for a week to come. 'Twas a fine big nose, and well it paid for a little groomin'. Afther that I was so well pleased wid my handicraftfulness that I niver raised fist on the gyard that came to take me to Clink. A child might ha' led me along, for I knew old Kearney's nose was ruined. That summer the Ould Rig'mint did not use their own Clink, bekase the cholera was hangin' about there like mildew on wet boots, an' 'twas murder to confine in ut. We borrowed the Clink that belonged to the Holy Christians (the rig'ment that has never seen service yet), and that lay a matther av a mile away, acrost two p'rade-grounds an' the main road, an' all the ladies av Cawnpore goin' out for their afternoon dhrive. So I moved in the best av society, my shadow dancin' along forninst me, an' the gyard as solemn as putty, the bracelets on my wrists, an' my heart full contint wid the notion av Kearney's pro—pro—probosculum in a shling.

'In the middle av ut all I perceived a gunner-orf'cer in full rig'mentals perusin' down the road, hell-for-leather, wid his mouth open. He fetched wan woild despairin' look on the dog-kyarts an' the polite society av Cawnpore, an' thin he dived like a rabbut into a dhrein by the side av the road.

“ ‘Bhoys,” sez I, “that orf’cer’s dhrunk. ’Tis scand’lus. Let’s take him to Clink too.”

‘The corp’ril of the gyard made a jump for me, unlocked my stringers, an’ he sez : “If it comes to runnin’, run for your life. If it doesn’t, I’ll trust your honour. Anyways,” sez he, “come to Clink whin you can.”

‘Then I behild him runnin’ wan way, stuffin’ the bracelets in his pocket, they bein’ Gov’ment property, and the gyard runnin’ another, an’ all the dog-kyarts runnin’ all ways to wanst, an’ me alone lookin’ down the red bag av a mouth av an elephint forty-two feet high at the shoulder, tin feet wide, wid tusks as long as the Ochterlony Monumint. That was my first reconnaissance. Maybe he was not quite so contagious, nor quite so tall, but I didn’t stop to throw out pickets. Mother av Hiven, how I ran down the road ! The baste began to inveshtigate the dhrein wid the gunner-orf’cer in ut ; an’ that was the makin’ av me. I tripped over wan of the rifles that my gyard had discarded (onsoldierly blackguards they was !), and whin I got up I was facin’ t’other way about an’ the elephint was huntin’ for the gunner-orf’cer. I can see his big fat back yet. Excipt that he didn’t dig, he carried on for all the world like little Vixen here at a rat-hole. He put his head down (by my sowl, he nearly stood on ut !) to shquint down the dhrein ; thin he’d grunt, and run round to the other ind in case the orf’cer was gone out by the back door ; an’ he’d shtuff his trunk down the flue an’ get ut filled wid mud, an’ blow ut out, an’ grunt, an’ swear ! My troth, he swore all hiven down upon that orf’cer ; an’ what a com-



missariat elephint had to do wid a gunner-orf'cer passed me. Me havin' nowhere to go except to Clink, I stud in the road wid the rifle, a Snider an' no amm'nition, philosophisin' upon the rear ind av the animal. All round me, miles and miles, there was howlin' desolation, for ivry human sowl wid two legs, or four for the matther av that, was ambuscadin', an' this ould rapparee stud on his head tuggin' and gruntin' above the dhRAIN, his tail stickin' up to the sky, an' he thryin' to thrumpet through three feet av road-sweepin's up his thrunk. Begad, 'twas wickud to behold !

'Subsequent he caught sight av me standin' alone in the wide, wide world lanin' on the rifle. That dishcomposed him, bekase he thought I was the gunner-orf'cer got out unbeknownst. He looked betune his feet at the dhRAIN, an' he looked at me, an' I sez to myself : "Terence, my son, you've been watchin' this Noah's ark too long. Run for your life !" Dear knows I wanted to tell him I was only a poor privit on my way to Clink, an' no orf'cer at all, at all ; but he put his ears forward av his thick head, an' I rethreated down the road grippin' the rifle, my back as cowl'd as a tombstone, and the slack av my trouses, where I made sure he'd take houl't, crawlin' wid—wid invidjus apprehension.

'I might ha' run till I dhropped, bekase I was betune the two straight lines av the road, an' a man, or a thousand men for the matther av that, are the like av sheep in keepin' betune right an' left marks.'

'Same as canaries,' said Ortheris from the darkness. 'Draw a line on a bloomin' little board, put their bloomin' little beaks there ; stay so for hever

and hever, amen, they will. 'Seed a 'ole reg'ment, I 'ave, walk crabways along the edge of a two-foot water-cut 'stid o' thinkin' to cross it. Men is sheep—bloomin' sheep. Go on.'

'But I saw his shadow wid the tail av my eye,' continued the man of experiences, 'an' "Wheel," I sez, "Terence, wheel!" an' I wheeled. 'Tis truth I cud hear the shparks flyin' from my heels; an' I shpun into the nearest compound, fetched wan jump from the gate to the verandah av the house, an' fell over a tribe of naygurs wid a half-caste boy at a desk, all manufacturin' harness. 'Twas Antonio's Carriage Emporium at Cawnpore. You know ut, sorr?'

'Ould Grambags must ha' wheeled abreast wid me, for his trunk came lickin' into the verandah like a belt in a barrick-room row, before I was in the shop. The naygurs an' the half-caste boy howled an' wint out at the back door, an' I stud lone as Lot's wife among the harness. A powerful thirsty thing is harness, by reason av the smell to ut.

'I wint into the back room, nobody bein' there to invite, an' I found a bottle av whisky and a goglet av wather. The first an' the second dhrink I never noticed, bein' dhry, but the fourth an' the fifth tuk good houl't av me an' I began to think scornful av elephints. "Take the upper ground in manœ'vrin', Terence," I sez; "an' you'll be a gin'ral yet," sez I. An' wid that I wint up to the flat mud roof av the house an' looked over the edge av the parapit, threadin' delicate. Ould Barrel-belly was in the compound, walkin' to an' fro, pluckin' a piece av grass here an' a weed there, for all the world like our

Colonel that is now whin his wife's given him a talkin'-down an' he's prom'nadin' to ease his timper. His back was to me, an' by the same token I hiccupped. He checked in his walk, wan ear forward like a deaf ould lady wid an ear-thrumpet, an' his thrunk hild out in a kind av fore-reaching hook. Thin he wagged his ear sayin', "Do my sinses deceive me?" as plain as print, an' he recomminst promenadin'. You know Antonio's compound? 'Twas as full thin as 'tis now av new kyarts and ould kyarts, an' second-hand kyarts an' kyarts for hire,—landos, an' b'rooshes an' brooms, an' wag'nettes av ivry description. Thin I hiccupped again, an' he began to study the ground beneath him, his tail whistlin' wid emotion. Thin he lapped his thrunk round the shaft av a wag'nette an' dhrew it out circumspectuous an' thoughtful. "He's not there," he sez, fumblin' in the cushions wid his thrunk. Thin I hiccupped again, an' wid that he lost his patience good an' all, same as this wan in the lines here.'

The gun-elephant was breaking into peal after peal of indignant trumpetings, to the disgust of the other animals who had finished their food and wished to drowse. Between the outcries we could hear him picking restlessly at his ankle-ring.

'As I was sayin',' Mulvaney went on, 'he behaved dishgraceful. He let out wid his fore-fut like a steam-hammer, bein' convinced that I was in ambuscade adjacent; an' that wag'nette ran back among the other carriages like a field-gun in charge. Thin he hauled ut out again an' shuk ut, an' by natur' it came all to little pieces. Afther that he went sheer damn, slam, dancin', lunatic, double-

shuffle demented wid the whole of Antonio's shtock for the season. He kicked, an' he straddled, and he stamped, an' he pounded all at wanst, his big bald head bobbin' up an' down, solemn as a rigadoon. He tuk a new shiny broom an' kicked ut on wan corner, an' ut opened out like a blossomin' lily ; an' he shtuck wan fool-foot through the flure av ut an' a wheel was shpinnin' on his tusk. At that he got scared, an' by this an' that he fair sat down plump among the carriages, an' they pricked 'im wid splinters till he was a boundin' pincushin. In the middle av the mess, whin the kyarts was climbin' wan on top av the other, an' rickochettin' off the mud walls, an' showin' their agility, wid him tearin' their wheels off, I heard the sound av distressful wailin' on the housetops, an' the whole Antonio firm an' fam'ly was cursin' me an' him from the roof next door ; me bekase I'd taken refuge wid them, and he bekase he was playin' shtep-dances wid the carriages av the aristocracy.

" " Divart his attention," sez Antonio, dancin' on the roof in his big white waistcoat. " Divart his attention," he sez, " or I'll prosecute you." An' the whole fam'ly shouts, " Hit him a kick, mister soldier."

" " He's divartin' himself," I sez, for it was just the worth av a man's life to go down into the compound. But by way av makin' show I threw the whisky-bottle ('twas not full whin I came there) at him. He shpun round from fwhat was left av the last kyart, an' shtuck his head into the verandah not three feet below me. Maybe 'twas the temptin'ness av his back or the whisky. Anyways, the next thing

I knew was me, wid my hands full av mud an' mortar, all fours on his back, an' the Snider just slidin' off the slope av his head. I grabbed that an' scuffled on his neck, dhruv my knees undher his big flappin' ears, an' we wint to glory out av that compound wid a shqueal that crawled up my back an' down my belly. Thin I remimbered the Snider, an' I grup ut by the muzzle an' hit him on the head. 'Twas most forlorn—like tappin' the deck av a throop-ship wid a cane to stop the engines whin you're sea-sick. But I parsevered till I sweated, an' at last from takin' no notice at all he began to grunt. I hit wid the full strength that was in me in those days, an' it might ha' discommoded him. We came back to the p'rade-groun' forty miles an hour, trumpetin' vainglorious. I niver stopped hammerin' him for a minut'; 'twas by way av divartin' him from runnin' undher the trees an' scrapin' me off like a poultice. The p'rade-groun' an' the road was all empty, but the throops was on the roofs av the barricks, an' betune Ould Thrajectory's gruntin' an' mine (for I was winded wid my stone-breakin'), I heard thim clappin' an' cheerin'. He was growin' more confused an' tuk to runnin' in circles.

"Begad," sez I to mysilf, "there's dacincy in all things, Terence. 'Tis like you've shplit his head, and whin you come out av Clink you'll be put under stoppages for killin' a Gov'ment elephint." At that I caressed him.

"'Ow the devil did you do that? Might as well pat a barrick," said Ortheris.

'Thried all manner av endearin' epitaphs, but bein' more than a little shuk up I disremimbered

what the divil would answer to. So, "Good dog," I sez ; "Pretty puss," sez I ; "Whoa mare," I sez ; an' at that I fetched him a shtroke av the butt for to conciliate him, an' he stud still among the barricks.

"Will no one take me off the top av this murderin' volcano ?" I sez at the top av my shout ; an' I heard a man yellin', "Hould on, faith an' patience, the other elephints are comin'." "Mother av Glory," I sez, "will I rough-ride the whole stud ? Come an' take me down, ye cowards !"

'Thin a brace av fat she-elephints wid mahouts an' a commissariat sargint came shufflin' round the corner av the barricks ; an' the mahouts was abusin' ould Potiphar's mother an' blood-kin.

"Obsarve my reinforcemints," I sez. "The're goin' to take you to Clink, my son ;" an' the child av calamity put his ears forward an' swung head on to those females. The pluck av him, afther my oratorio on his brain-pan, wint to the heart av me. "I'm in dishgrace mesilf," I sez, "but I'll do what I can for ye. Will ye go to Clink like a man, or fight like a fool whin there's no chanst ?" Wid that I fetched him wan last lick on the head, an' he fetched a tremenjus groan an' dhropped his thrunk. "Think," sez I to him, an' "Halt !" I sez to the mahouts. They was anxious so to do. I could feel the ould reprobitch meditatin' undher me. At last he put his thrunk straight out an' gave a most melancholious toot (the like av a sigh wid an elephant) ; an' by that I knew the white flag was up an' the rest was no more than considherin' his feelin's.

"He's done," I sez. "Kape open ordher left an' right alongside. We'll go to Clink quiet."

'Sez the commissariat sargint to me from his elephant, "Are you a man or a mericle?" sez he.

"I'm betwixt an' betune," I sez, thryin' to set up stiff-back. "An' what," sez I, "may ha' set this animal off in this opprobrious shtyle?" I sez, the gun-butt light an' easy on my hip an' my left hand dhropped, such as throopers behave. We was bowlin' on to the elephint-lines under escort all this time.

"I was not in the lines whin the throuble began," sez the sargint. "They tuk him off carryin' tents an' such like, an' put him to the gun-team. I knew he would not like ut, but by token it fair tore his heart out."

"Faith, wan man's meat is another's poison," I sez. "'Twas bein' put on to carry tents that was the ruin av me." An' my heart warrumed to Ould Double Ends bekase he had been put upon.

"We'll close on him here," sez the sargint whin we got to the elephint-lines. All the mahouts an' their childher was round the pickets cursin' my pony from a mile to hear. "You skip off on to my elephint's back," he sez. "There'll be throuble."

"Sind that howlin' crowd away," I sez, "or he'll thrample the life out av thim." I cud feel his ears beginnin' to twitch. "An' do you an' your immoril she-elephints go well clear away. I will get down here. He's an Irishman," I sez, "for all his long Jew's nose, an' he shall be threatened like an Irishman."

"Are ye tired av life?" sez the sargint.

"Divil a bit," I sez; "but wan av us has to win, an' I'm av opinion 'tis me. Get back," I sez.

'The two elephints wint off, an' Smith O'Brine

came to a halt dead above his own pickuts. "Down, sez I, whackin' him on the head, an' down he wint, shouldher over shouldher like a hill-side slippin' afther rain. "Now," sez I, slidin' down his nose an' runnin' to the front av him, "you will see the man that's betther than you."

'His big head was down betune his big forefeet, an' they was twisted in sideways like a kitten's. He looked the picture av innocence an' forlornsomeness, an' by this an' that his big hairy undherlip was thremblin', an' he winked his eyes together to kape from cryin'. "For the love av God," I sez, clean forgettin' he was a dumb baste, "don't take ut to heart so ! Aisy, be aisyy," I sez ; an' wid that I rubbed his cheek an' betune his eyes an' the top av his thrunk, talkin' all the time. "Now," sez I, "I'll make you comfortable for the night. Send wan or two childher here," I sez to the sargint who was watchin' for to see me killed. "He'll rouse at the sight av a man."

'You got bloomin' clever all of a sudden,' said Ortheris. "'Ow did you come to know 'is funny little ways that soon ?'

'Bekase,' said Terence with emphasis, 'bekase I had conquered the beggar, my son.'

'Ho !' said Ortheris between doubt and derision. 'G'on.'

'His mahout's child an' wan or two other line-babies came runnin' up, not bein' afraid av anything, an' some got wather, an' I washed the top av his poor sore head (begad, I had done him to a turn !), an' some picked the pieces av carts out av his hide, an' we scraped him, an' handled him all over, an' we put



a thunderin' big poultice av neem-leaves (the same that we stick on a pony's gall) on his head, an' it looked like a smokin'-cap, an' we put a pile av young sugar-cane forninst him, an' he began to pick at ut. "Now," sez I, settin' down on his fore-foot, "we'll have a dhrink, an' let bygones be." I sent a naygur-child for a quart av arrack, an' the sargint's wife she sint me out four fingers av whisky, an' when the liquor came I cud see by the twinkle in Ould Typhoon's eye that he was no more a stranger to ut than me,—worse luck, than me! So he tuk his quart like a Christian, an' *thin* I put his shackles on, chained him fore an' aft to the pickuts, an' gave him my blessin' an' wint back to barracks.'

'And after?' I said in the pause.

'Ye can guess,' said Mulvaney. 'There was confusion, an' the Colonel gave me ten rupees, an' the Adj'tant gave me five, an' my Comp'ny Captain gave me five, an' the men carried me round the barracks shoutin'.'

'Did you go to Clink?' said Ortheris.

'I niver heard a word more about the misundher-standin' wid Kearney's beak, if that's what you mane; but sev'ril av the bhoys was tuk off sudden to the Holy Christians' Hotel that night. Small blame to thim,—they had twenty rupees in dhrinks. I wint to lie down an' sleep ut off, for I was as done an' double-done as him there in the lines. 'Tis no small thing to go ride elephints.

'Subsequent, me an' the Venerable Father av Sin became mighty frindly. I wud go down to the lines, whin I was in dishgrace, an' spend an afternoon collogin' wid him; he chewin' wan stick av sugar-

cane an' me another, as thick as thieves. He'd take all I had out av my pockets an' put ut back again, an' now an' thin I'd bring him beer for his dijistin', an' I'd give him advice about bein' well behaved an' keepin' off the books. Afther that he wint the way av the Army, an' that's bein' thransferred as soon as you've made a good frind.'

'So you never saw him again?' I demanded.

'Do you belave the first half av the affair?' said Terence.

'I'll wait till Learoyd comes,' I said evasively. Except when he was carefully tutored by the other two and the immediate money-benefit explained, the Yorkshireman did not tell lies; and Terence, I knew, had a profligate imagination.

'There's another part still,' said Mulvaney. 'Ortheris was in that.'

'Then I'll believe it all,' I answered, not from any special belief in Ortheris's word, but from desire to learn the rest. Ortheris stole a pup from me when our acquaintance was new, and, with the little beast stifling under his overcoat, denied not only the theft, but that he ever was interested in dogs.

'That was at the beginnin' av the Afghan business,' said Mulvaney; 'years afther the men that had seen me do the thrick was dead or gone Home. I came not to speak av ut at the last,—bekase I do *not* care to knock the face av ivry man that calls me a liar. At the very beginnin' av the marchin' I wint sick like a fool. I had a boot-gall, but I was all for keepin' up wid the Rig'mint and such like foolishness. So I finished up wid a hole in my heel that you cud ha' dhruv a tent-peg into. Faith, how often have I

preached that to recruities since, for a warnin' to thim to look afther their feet ! Our docthor, who knew our business as well as his own, he sez to me, in the middle av the Tangi Pass it was : "That's sheer damned carelessness," sez he. "How often have I tould you that a marchin' man is no stronger than his feet,—his feet,—his feet !" he sez. "Now to hospital you go," he sez, "for three weeks, an expense to your Quane an' a nuisance to your counthry. Next time," sez he, "perhaps you'll put some av the whisky you pour down your throat, an' some av the tallow you put into your hair, into your socks," sez he. Faith, he was a just man. So soon as we come to the head av the Tangi I wint to hospital, hoppin' on wan fut, woild wid disappointmint. 'Twas a field-hospital (all flies an' native apothecaries an' liniment) dhropped, in a way av speakin', close by the head av the Tangi. The hospital guard was ravin' mad wid us sick for keepin' thim there, an' we was ravin' mad at bein' kept ; an' through the Tangi, day an' night an' night an' day, the fut an' horse an' guns an' commissariat an' tents an' followers av the brigades was pourin' like a coffee-mill. The doolies came dancin' through, scores an' scores av thim, an' they'd turn up the hill to hospital wid their sick, an' I lay in bed nursin' my heel, an' hearin' the men bein' tuk out. I remimber wan night (the time I was tuk wid fever) a man came rowlin' through the tents an', "Is there any room to die here ?" he sez ; "there's none wid the columns" ; an' at that he dhropped dead acrost a cot, an' thin the man in ut began to complain against dyin' all alone in the dust undher dead men. Thin I must ha' turned mad wid the

fever, an' for a week was I prayin' the saints to stop the noise av the columns movin' through the Tangi. Gun-wheels it was that wore my head thin. Ye know how 'tis wid fever ?'

We nodded ; there was no need to explain.

'Gun-wheels an' feet an' people shoutin', but mostly gun-wheels. 'Twas neither night nor day to me for a week. In the mornin' they'd rowl up the tent-flies, an' we sick cud look at the Pass an' considher what was comin' next. Horse, fut, or guns, they'd be sure to dhrop wan or two sick wid us an' we'd get news. Wan mornin', whin the fever hild off of me, I was watchin' the Tangi, an' 'twas just like the picture on the backside av the Afghan medal,—men an' elephints an' guns comin' wan at a time crawlin' out of a dhrain.'

'It *were* a dhrain,' said Ortheris with feeling. 'I've fell out an' been sick in the Tangi twice ; an' wot turns my innards ain't no bloomin' vi'lets neither.'

'The Pass gave a twist at the ind, so everything shot out suddint an' they'd built a throop-bridge (mud an' dead mules) over a nullah at the head av ut. I lay an' counted the elephints (gun-elephints) thryin' the bridge wid their thrunks an' rollin' out sagacious. The fifth elephint's head came round the corner, an' he threw up his thrunk, an' he fetched a toot, an' there he shtuck at the head of the Tangi like a cork in a bottle. "Faith," thinks I to mysilf, "he will not thrust the bridge ; there will be throuble."'

'Trouble ! My Gawd !' said Ortheris. 'Terence, I was be'ind that blooming 'uttee up to my stock in dust. Trouble !'

'Tell on then, little man ; I only saw the hospital ind av ut.' Mulvaney knocked the ashes out of his pipe, as Ortheris heaved the dogs aside and went on.

'We was escort to them guns, three comp'nies of us,' he said. 'Dewcy was our Major, and our orders was to roll up anything we come across in the Tangi an' shove it out t'other end. Sort o' pop-gun picnic, see ? We'd rolled up a lot o' lazy beggars o' native followers, an' some commissariat supplies that was bivoo-whackin' for ever seemin'ly, an' all the sweepin's of 'arf a dozen things what ought to 'ave bin at the front weeks ago, an' Dewcy, he sez to us : " You're most 'eart-breakin' sweeps," 'e sez. " For 'eving's sake," sez 'e, " do a little sweepin' now." So we swep',—s'welp me, 'ow we did sweep 'em along ! There was a full reg'ment be'ind us ; most anxious to get on they was ; an' they kep' on sendin' to us with the Colonel's compliments, an' what in 'ell was we stoppin' the way for, please ? Oh, they was partic'lar polite ! So was Dewcy ! 'E sent 'em back wot-for, an' 'e give us wot-for, an' we give the guns wot-for, an' they give the commissariat wot-for, an' the commissariat give first-class extry wot-for to the native followers, an' on we'd go again till we was stuck, an' the 'ole Pass 'ud be swimmin'-Allelujah for a mile an' a 'arf. We 'adn't no tempers, nor no seats to our trousies, an' our coats an' our rifles was chucked in the carts, so as we might ha' been cut up any minute, an' we was doin' drover-work. That was wot it was ; drovin' on the Islin'ton road !

'I was close up at the 'ead of the column when we saw the end of the Tangi openin' out ahead of us, an' I sez : " The door's open, boys. 'Oo'll git

to the gall'ry fust?" I sez. Then I saw Dewcy screwin' 'is bloomin' eyeglass in 'is eye an' lookin' straight on. "Propped,—*ther* beggar!" he sez; an' the be'ind end o' that bloomin' old 'uttee was shinin' through the dust like a bloomin' old moon made o' tarpaulin. Then we 'alted, all chock-a-block, one atop o' the other, an' right at the back o' the guns there sails in a lot o' silly grinnin' camels, what the commissariat was in charge of—sailin' away as if they was at the Zoological Gardens an' squeezin' our men most awful. The dust was that up you couldn't see your 'and; an' the more we 'it 'em on the 'ead the more their drivers sez, "Accha! Accha!" an' by Gawd it was "at yer" before you knew where you was. An' that 'uttee's be'ind end stuck in the Pass good an' tight, an' no one knew wot for.

'Fust thing we 'ad to do was to fight them bloomin' camels. I wasn't goin' to be eat, by no bull-*oont*; so I 'eld up my trousies with one 'and, standin' on a rock, an' 'it away with my belt at every nose I saw bobbin' above me. Then the camels fell back, an' they 'ad to fight to keep the rear-guard an' the native followers from crushin' into them; an' the rear-guard 'ad to send down the Tangi to warn the other reg'ment that we was blocked. I 'eard the mahouts shoutin' in front that the 'uttee wouldn't cross the bridge; an' I saw Dewcy skippin' about through the dust like a musquito-worm in a tank. Then our comp'nies got tired o' waitin' an' begun to mark time, an' some goat struck up *Tommy, make room for your Uncle*. After *that*, you couldn't neither see nor breathe nor 'ear; an' there we was, singin' bloomin'

serenades to the end of a' elephant that don't care for tunes ! I sung too ; I couldn't do nothin' else. They was strengthenin' the bridge in front, all for the sake of the 'uttee. By an' by a' orf'cer caught me by the throat an' choked the sing out of me. So I caught the next man I could see by the throat an' choked the sing out of 'im.'

'What's the difference between being choked by an officer and being hit ?' I asked, remembering a little affair in which Ortheris's honour had been injured by his lieutenant.

'One's a bloomin' lark, an' one's a bloomin' insult !' said Ortheris. 'Besides, we was on service, an' no one cares what an orf'cer does then, s'long as 'e gets our rations an' don't get us unusual cut up. After that we got quiet, an' I 'eard Dewcy say that 'e'd court-martial the lot of us soon as we was out of the Tangi. Then we give three cheers for Dewcy an' three more for the Tangi ; an' the 'uttee's be'ind end was stickin' in the Pass, so we cheered *that*. Then they said the bridge had been strengthened, an' we give three cheers for the bridge ; but the 'uttee wouldn't move a bloomin' hinch. Not 'im ! Then we cheered 'im again, an' Kite Dawson, that was corner-man at all the sing-songs ('e died on the way down), began to give a nigger lecture on the be'ind ends of elephants, an' Dewcy, 'e tried to keep 'is face for a minute, but, Lord, you couldn't do such when Kite was playin' the fool an' askin' whether 'e mightn't 'ave leave to rent a villa an' raise 'is orphan children in the Tangi, 'cos 'e couldn't get 'ome no more. Then up come a orf'cer (mounted, like a fool, too) from the reg'ment at the back with some

more of his Colonel's pretty little compliments, an' what was this delay, please. We sung 'im *There's another bloomin' row downstairs* till 'is 'orse bolted, an' then we give 'im three cheers ; an' Kite Dawson sez 'e was goin' to write to *The Times* about the awful state of the streets in Afghanistan. The 'uttee's be'ind end was stickin' in the Pass all the time. At last one o' the mahouts came to Dewcy an' sez something. "Oh Lord !" sez Dewcy, "I don't know the beggar's visitin'-list ! I'll give 'im another ten minutes an' then I'll shoot 'im." Things was gettin' pretty dusty in the Tangi, so we all listened. "'E wants to see a friend," sez Dewcy out loud to the men, an' 'e mopped 'is forehead an' sat down on a gun-tail.

'I leave it to you to judge 'ow the Reg'ment shouted. "That's all right," we sez. "Three cheers for Mister Winterbottom's friend," sez we. "Why didn't you say so at first ? Pass the word for old Swizzletail's wife,"—and such like. Some o' the men they didn't laugh. They took it same as if it might have been a' introduction like, 'cos they knew about 'uttees. Then we all run forward over the guns an' in an' out among the elephants' legs,—Lord, I wonder 'arf the comp'nies wasn't squashed—an' the next thing I saw was Terence 'ere, lookin' like a sheet o' wet paper, comin' down the 'illside wid a sergeant. "'Strewth," I sez. "I might ha' knowed 'e'd be at the bottom of any cat's trick," sez I. Now you tell wot 'appened your end ?'

'I lay be the same as you did, little man, listenin' to the noises an' the bhoys singin'. Presintly I heard whisperin' an' the doctor sayin', "Get out av



this, wakin' my sick wid your jokes about elephints." An' another man sez, all angry : "'Tis a joke that is stoppin' two thousand men in the Tangi. That son av sin av a haybag av an elephint sez, or the mahouts sez for him, that he wants to see a friend, an' he'll not lift hand or fut till he finds him. I'm wore out wid inthrojucin' sweepers an' coolies to him, an' his hide as full o' baynit pricks as a musquito-net av holes, an' I'm here undher ordhers, docther dear, to ask if any one, sick or well, or alive or dead, knows an elephint. I'm not mad," he sez, settin' on a box av medical comforts. "'Tis my ordhers, an' 'tis my mother," he sez, "that would laugh at me for the father av all fools to-day. Does any wan here know an elephint ?" We sick was all quiet.

"Now you've had your answer," sez the doctor. "Go away."

"Hould on," I sez, thinkin' mistiways in my cot, an' I did not know my own voice. "I'm by way av bein' acquainted wid an elephint, myself," I sez.

"That's delirium," sez the doctor. "See what you've done, sargint. Lie down, man," he sez, seein' me thryin' to get up.

"'Tis not," I sez. "I rode him round Cawn-pore barricks. He will not ha' forgotten. I bruk his head wid a rifle."

"Mad as a coot," sez the doctor, an' thin he felt my head. "It's quare," sez he. "Man," he sez, "if you go, d'you know 'twill either kill or cure ?"

"What do I care ?" sez I. "If I'm mad, 'tis better dead."

"Faith, that's sound enough," sez the doctor. "You've no fever on you now."

“Come on,” sez the sargint. “We’re all mad to-day, an’ the throops are wantin’ their dinner.” He put his arm round av me an’ I came into the sun, the hills an’ the rocks skippin’ big giddy-go-rounds. “Seventeen years have I been in the army,” sez the sargint, “an’ the days av mericles are not done. They’ll be givin’ us more pay next. Begad,” he sez, “the brute knows you !”

‘Ould Obstructionist was screamin’ like all possist whin I came up, an’ I heard forty million men up the Tangi shoutin’, “He knows him !” Thin the big thrunk came round me an’ I was nigh fainting wid weakness. “Are you well, Malachi ?” I sez, givin’ him the name he answered to in the lines. “Malachi, my son, are you well ?” sez I, “for I am not.” At that he thrumpeted again till the Pass rang to ut, an’ the other elephints tuk it up. Thin I got a little strength back. “Down, Malachi,” I sez, “an’ put me up, but touch me tendher for I am not good.” He was on his knees in a minut’ an’ he slung me up as gentle as a girl. “Go on now, my son,” I sez. “You’re blockin’ the road.” He fetched wan more joyous toot, an’ swung grand out av the head av the Tangi, his gun-gear clankin’ on his back ; an’ at the back av him there wint the most amazin’ shout I iver heard. An’ thin I felt my head shpin, an’ a mighty sweat bruk out on me, an’ Malachi was growin’ taller an’ taller to me settin’ on his back, an’ I sez, foolish like an’ weak, smilin’ all round an’ about, “Take me down,” I sez, “or I’ll fall.”

‘The next I remimber was lyin’ in my cot again, limp as a chewed rag, but cured av the fever, an’ the Tangi as empty as the back av my hand. They’d all

gone up to the front, an' ten days later I wint up too, havin' blocked an' unblocked an entire Army Corps. What do you think av ut, sorr ?'

'I'll wait till I see Learoyd,' I repeated.

'Ah'm here,' said a shadow from among the shadows. 'Ah've heerd t' tale too.'

'Is it true, Jock ?'

'Ay ; true as t'owd bitch has gotten t'mange. Orth'ris, yo' maun't let t'dawgs hev owt to do wi' her.'

## ‘BRUGGLESMITH’

THE first officer of the *Breslau* asked me to dinner on board, before the ship went round to Southampton to pick up her passengers. The *Breslau* was lying below London Bridge, her fore-hatches opened for cargo, and her deck littered with nuts and bolts, and screws and chains. The Black M’Phee had been putting some finishing touches to his adored engines, and M’Phee is the most tidy of chief engineers. If the leg of a cockroach gets into one of his slide-valves the whole ship knows it, and half the ship has to clean up the mess.

After dinner, which the first officer, M’Phee, and I ate on one little corner of the empty saloon, M’Phee returned to the engine-room to attend to some brass-fitters. The first officer and I smoked on the bridge and watched the lights of the crowded shipping till it was time for me to go home. It seemed, in the pauses of our conversation, that I could catch an echo of fearful bellowings from the engine-room, and the voice of M’Phee singing of home and the domestic affections.

‘M’Phee has a friend aboard to-night—a man who was a boiler-maker at Greenock when M’Phee was a ‘prentice,’ said the first officer. ‘I didn’t ask him to dine with us because——’

‘I see—I mean I hear,’ I answered. We talked

on for a few minutes longer, and M’Phee came up from the engine-room with his friend on his arm.

‘Let me present ye to this gentleman,’ said M’Phee. ‘He’s a great admirer o’ your wor-rks. He has just hearrd o’ them.’

M’Phee could never pay a compliment prettily. The friend sat down suddenly on a bollard, saying that M’Phee had understated the truth. Personally, he on the bollard considered that Shakespeare was trembling in the balance solely on my account, and if the first officer wished to dispute this he was prepared to fight the first officer then or later, ‘as per invoice.’ ‘Man, if ye only knew,’ said he, wagging his head, ‘the times I’ve lain in my lonely bunk reading *Vanity Fair* an’ sobbin’—ay, weepin’ bitterly at the pure fascination of it.’

He shed a few tears for guarantee of good faith, and the first officer laughed. M’Phee resettled the man’s hat, that had tilted over one eyebrow.

‘That’ll wear off in a little. It’s just the smell o’ the engine-room,’ said M’Phee.

‘I think I’ll wear off myself,’ I whispered to the first officer. ‘Is the dinghy ready?’

The dinghy was at the gangway, which was down, and the first officer went forward to find a man to row me to the bank. He returned with a very sleepy Lascar, who knew the river.

‘Are you going?’ said the man on the bollard. ‘Well, I’ll just see ye home. M’Phee, help me down the gangway. It has as many ends as a cat-o’-nine-tails, and—losh!—how innumerable are the dinghies!’

‘You’d better let him come with you,’ said the

first officer. 'Muhammad Jan, put the drunk Sahib ashore first. Take the sober Sahib to the next stairs.'

I had my foot in the bow of the dinghy, the tide was making up-stream, when the man cannoned against me, pushed the Lascar back on the gangway, cast loose the painter, and the dinghy began to saw, stern-first, along the side of the *Breslau*.

'We'll have no exter-r-raneous races here,' said the man. 'I've known the Thames for thirty years——'

There was no time for argument. We were drifting under the *Breslau's* stern, and I knew that her propeller was half out of water, in the middle of an inky tangle of buoys, low-lying hawsers, and moored ships, with the tide ripping through them.

'What shall I do?' I shouted to the first officer.

'Find the Police Boat as soon as you can, and for God's sake get some way on the dinghy. Steer with the oar. The rudder's unshipped and——'

I could hear no more. The dinghy slid away, bumped on a mooring-buoy, swung round and jiggled off irresponsibly as I hunted for the oar. The man sat in the bow, his chin on his hands, smiling.

'Row, you ruffian,' I said. 'Get her out into the middle of the river——'

'It's a preevilege to gaze on the face o' genius. Let me go on thinking. There was "Little Barnaby Dorrit" and "The Mystery o' the Bleak Druid." I sailed in a ship called the *Druid* once—badly found she was. It all comes back to me so sweet. It all comes back to me. Man, ye steer like a genius.'

We bumped round another mooring-buoy and drifted on to the bows of a Norwegian timber-ship—I could see the great square holes on either side of the cut-water. Then we dived into a string of barges and scraped through them by the paint on our planks. It was a consolation to think that the dinghy was being reduced in value at every bump, but the question before me was when she would begin to leak. The man looked ahead into the pitchy darkness and whistled.

‘Yon’s a Castle liner ; her ties are black. She’s swinging across stream. Keep her port light on our starboard bow, and go large,’ he said.

‘How can I keep anything anywhere? You’re sitting on the oars. Row, man, if you don’t want to drown.’

He took the sculls, saying sweetly : ‘No harm comes to a drunken man. That’s why I wished to come wi’ *you*. Man, ye’re not fit to be alone in a boat.’

He flirted the dinghy round the big ship, and for the next ten minutes I enjoyed—positively enjoyed—an exhibition of first-class steering. We threaded in and out of the mercantile marine of Great Britain as a ferret threads a rabbit-hole, and we, he that is to say, sang joyously to each ship till men looked over bulwarks and cursed us. When we came to some moderately clear water he gave the sculls to me, and said:

‘If ye could row as ye write, I’d respect you for all your vices. Yon’s London Bridge. Take her through.’

We shot under the dark ringing arch, and came

out the other side, going up swiftly with the tide chanting songs of victory. Except that I wished to get home before morning, I was growing reconciled to the jaunt. There were one or two stars visible, and by keeping into the centre of the stream, we could not come to any very serious danger.

The man began to sing loudly:—

‘ The smartest clipper that you could find,  
Yo ho ! Oho !  
Was the *Marg’ret Evans* of the Black X Line,  
A hundred years ago !

Incorporate that in your next book, which is marvellous.’ Here he stood up in the bows and declaimed :—

‘ Ye Towers o’ Julia, London’s lasting wrong,  
By mony a foul an’ midnight murder fed—  
Sweet Thames run softly till I end my song—  
And yon’s the grave as little as my bed.

I’m a poet mysel’ an’ I can feel for others.’

‘ Sit down,’ said I. ‘ You’ll have the boat over.’

‘ Ay, I’m settin’—settin’ like a hen.’ He plumped down heavily, and added, shaking his forefinger at me :—

‘ Lear-rn, prudent, cautious self-control  
Is wisdom’s root.

How did a man o’ your parts come to be so drunk ? Oh, it’s a sinfu’ thing, an’ ye may thank God on all fours that I’m with you. What’s yon boat ?’

We had drifted far up the river, and a boat manned by four men, who rowed with a soothingly regular stroke, was overhauling us.



‘It’s the River Police,’ I said, at the top of my voice.

‘Oh ay ! If your sin do not find you out on dry land, it will find you out in the deep waters. Is it like they’ll give us drink ?’

‘Exceedingly likely. I’ll hail them.’ I hailed.

‘What are you doing ?’ was the answer from the boat.

‘It’s the *Breslau’s* dinghy broken loose,’ I began.

‘It’s a vara drunken man broke loose,’ roared my companion, ‘and I’m taking him home by water, for he cannot stand on dry land.’ Here he shouted my name twenty times running, and I could feel the blushes racing over my body three deep.

‘You’ll be locked up in ten minutes, my friend,’ I said, ‘and I don’t think you’ll be bailed either.’

‘H’sh, man, h’sh. They think I’m your uncle.’ He caught up a scull and began splashing the boat as it ranged alongside.

‘You’re a nice pair,’ said the sergeant at last.

‘I am anything you please so long as you take this fiend away. Tow us in to the nearest station, and I’ll make it worth your while,’ I said.

‘Corruption—corruption,’ roared the man, throwing himself flat in the bottom of the boat. ‘Like unto the worms that perish, so is man ! And all for the sake of a filthy half-crown to be arrested by the River Police at my time o’ life !’

‘For pity’s sake, row,’ I shouted. ‘The man’s drunk.’

They rowed us to a flat—a fire or a police-station ; it was too dark to see which. I could feel that they regarded me in no better light than the other man.

I could not explain, for I was holding the far end of the painter, and feeling cut off from all respectability.

We got out of the boat, my companion falling flat on his wicked face, and the sergeant asked us rude questions about the dinghy. My companion washed his hands of all responsibility. He was an old man ; he had been lured into a stolen boat by a young man—probably a thief—he had saved the boat from wreck (this was absolutely true), and now he expected salvage in the shape of hot whisky and water. The sergeant turned to me. Fortunately I was in evening dress, and had a card to show. More fortunately still, the sergeant happened to know the *Breslau* and M'Phee. He promised to send the dinghy down next tide, and was not beyond accepting my thanks, in silver.

As this was satisfactorily arranged, I heard my companion say angrily to a constable, 'If you will not give it to a dry man, ye maun to a drookit.' Then he walked deliberately off the edge of the flat into the water. Somebody stuck a boat-hook into his clothes and hauled him out.

'Now,' said he triumphantly, 'under the rules o' the R-royal Humane Society, ye must give me hot whisky and water. Do not put temptation before the laddie. He's my nephew an' a good boy i' the main. Tho' why he should masquerade as Mister Thackeray on the high seas is beyond my comprehension. Oh, the vanity o' youth ! M'Phee told me ye were as vain as a peacock. I mind that now.'

'You had better give him something to drink and wrap him up for the night. I don't know who

he is,’ I said desperately, and when the man had settled down to a drink supplied on my representations, I escaped and found that I was near a bridge.

I went towards Fleet Street, intending to take a hansom and go home. After the first feeling of indignation died out, the absurdity of the experience struck me fully and I began to laugh aloud in the empty streets, to the scandal of a policeman. The more I reflected the more heartily I laughed, till my mirth was quenched by a hand on my shoulder, and turning I saw him who should have been in bed at the river police-station. He was damp all over ; his wet silk hat rode far at the back of his head, and round his shoulders hung a striped yellow blanket, evidently the property of the State.

‘The crackling o’ thorns under a pot,’ said he, solemnly. ‘Laddie, have ye not thought o’ the sin of idle laughter ? My heart misgave me that ever ye’d get home, an’ I’ve just come to convoy you a piece. They’re sore uneducate down there by the river. They wouldna listen to me when I talked o’ your worrks, so I e’en left them. Cast the blanket about you, laddie. It’s fine and cold.’

I groaned inwardly. Providence evidently intended that I should frolic through eternity with M’Phee’s infamous acquaintance.

‘Go away,’ I said ; ‘go home, or I’ll give you in charge !’

He leaned against a lamp-post and laid his finger to his nose—his dishonourable, carnelian neb.

‘I mind now that M’Phee told me ye were vainer than a peacock, an’ your castin’ me adrift in a boat shows ye were drunker than an owl. A good name

is as a savoury bakemeat. I ha' nane.' He smacked his lips joyously.

' Well, I know that,' I said.

' Ay, but *ye* have. I mind now that M'Phee spoke o' your reputation that ye're so proud of. Laddie, if ye gie me in charge—I'm old enough to be your father—I'll bla-ast your reputation as far as my voice can carry ; for I'll call you by name till the cows come hame. It's no jestin' matter to be a friend to me. If you discard my friendship, ye must come to Vine Street wi' me for stealin' the *Breslau's* dinghy.'

Then he sang at the top of his voice :—

' In the mornnin'—

I' the mornnin' by the black van—

We'll toddle up to Vine Street i' the mornnin' !

Yon's my own composeetion, but *I'm* not vain. We'll go home together, laddie, we'll go home together.' And he sang 'Auld Lang Syne' to show that he meant it.

A policeman suggested that we had better move on, and we moved on to the Law Courts near St. Clement Danes. My companion was quieter now, and his speech, which up till that time had been distinct—it was a marvel to hear how in his condition he could talk dialect—began to slur and slide and slummock. He bade me observe the architecture of the Law Courts and linked himself lovingly to my arm. Then he saw a policeman, and before I could shake him off, whirled me up to the man singing :—

' Every member of the Force

Has a watch and chain of course—'

and threw his dripping blanket over the helmet of the Law. In any other country in the world we should have run an exceedingly good chance of being shot, or dirked, or clubbed—and clubbing is worse than being shot. But I reflected in that wet-cloth tangle that this was England, where the police are made to be banged and battered and bruised, that they may the better endure a police-court reprimand next morning. We three fell in a festoon, he calling on me by name—that was the tingling horror of it—to sit on the policeman’s head and cut the traces. I wriggled clear first and shouted to the policeman to kill the blanket-man.

Naturally, the policeman answered : ‘ You’re as bad as ’im,’ and chased me, as the smaller man, round St. Clement Danes into Holywell Street, where I ran into the arms of another policeman. That flight could not have lasted more than a minute and a half, but it seemed to me as long and as wearisome as the foot-bound flight of a nightmare. I had leisure to think of a thousand things as I ran ; but most I thought of the great and god-like man who held a sitting in the north gallery of St. Clement Danes a hundred years ago. I know that he at least would have felt for me. So occupied was I with these considerations, that when the other policeman hugged me to his bosom and said : ‘ What are you tryin’ to do ? ’ I answered with exquisite politeness : ‘ Sir, let us take a walk down Fleet Street.’ ‘ Bow Street’ll do *your* business, I think,’ was the answer, and for a moment I thought so too, till it seemed I might scuffle out of it. Then there was a hideous scene, and it was complicated by my companion

hurrying up with the blanket and telling me—always by name—that he would rescue me or perish in the attempt.

‘Knock him down,’ I pleaded. ‘Club his head open first and I’ll explain afterwards.’

The first policeman, the one who had been outraged, drew his truncheon and cut at my companion’s head. The high silk hat crackled and the owner dropped like a log.

‘Now you’ve done it,’ I said. ‘You’ve probably killed him.’

Holywell Street never goes to bed. A small crowd gathered on the spot, and some one of German extraction shrieked: ‘You haf killed the man.’

Another cried: ‘Take his bloomin’ number. I saw him strook cruel ’ard. Yah!’

Now the street was empty when the trouble began, and, saving the two policemen and myself, no one had seen the blow. I said, therefore, in a loud and cheerful voice:—

‘The man’s a friend of mine. He’s fallen down in a fit. Bobby, will you bring the ambulance?’ Under my breath I added: ‘It’s five shillings apiece, and the man didn’t hit you.’

‘No, but ’im and you tried to scrob me,’ said the policeman.

This was not a thing to argue about.

‘Is Dempsey on duty at Charing Cross?’ I said.

‘Wot d’you know of Dempsey, you bloomin’ garrotter?’ said the policeman.

‘If Dempsey’s there, he knows me. Get the ambulance quick, and I’ll take him to Charing Cross.’

‘You’re coming to Bow Street, *you* are,’ said the policeman crisply.

‘The man’s dying’—he lay groaning on the pavement—‘get the ambulance,’ said I.

There is an ambulance at the back of St. Clement Danes, whereof I know more than most people. The policeman seemed to possess the keys of the box in which it lived. We trundled it out—it was a three-wheeled affair with a hood—and we bundled the body of the man upon it.

A body in an ambulance looks very extremely dead. The policemen softened at the sight of the stiff boot-heels.

‘Now then,’ said they, and I fancied that they still meant Bow Street.

‘Let me see Dempsey for three minutes if he’s on duty,’ I answered.

‘Very good. He is.’

Then I knew that all would be well, but before we started I put my head under the ambulance hood to see if the man were alive. A guarded whisper came to my ear.

‘Laddie, you maun pay me for a new hat. They’ve broken it. Dinna desert me now, laddie. I’m o’er old to go to Bow Street in my grey hairs for a fault of yours. Laddie, dinna desert me.’

‘You’ll be lucky if you get off under seven years,’ I said to the policeman.

Moved by a very lively fear of having exceeded their duty, the two policemen left their beats, and the mournful procession wound down the empty Strand. Once west of the Adelphi, I knew I should be in my own country; and the policemen had reason

to know that too, for as I was pacing proudly a little ahead of the catafalque, another policeman said 'Good-night, sir,' to me as he passed.

'Now, you see,' I said, with condescension. 'I wouldn't be in your shoes for something. On my word, I've a great mind to march you two down to Scotland Yard.'

'If the gentleman's a friend o' yours, per'aps—' said the policeman who had given the blow, and was reflecting on the consequences.

'Perhaps you'd like me to go away and say nothing about it,' I said. Then there hove into view the figure of Constable Dempsey, glittering in his oil-skins, and an angel of light to me. I had known him for months ; he was an esteemed friend of mine, and we used to talk together in the early mornings. The fool seeks to ingratiate himself with Princes and Ministers ; and courts and cabinets leave him to perish miserably. The wise man makes allies among the police and the hansoms, so that his friends spring up from the round-house and the cab-rank, and even his offences become triumphal processions.

'Dempsey,' said I, 'have the police been on strike again ? They've put some things on duty at St. Clement Danes that want to take me to Bow Street for garrotting.'

'Lor', sir !' said Dempsey indignantly.

'Tell them I'm not a garrotter, nor a thief. It's simply disgraceful that a gentleman can't walk down the Strand without being man-handled by these roughs. One of them has done his best to kill my friend here ; and I'm taking the body home. Speak for me, Dempsey.'



There was no time for the much misrepresented policemen to say a word. Dempsey spoke to them in language calculated to frighten. They tried to explain, but Dempsey launched into a glowing catalogue of my virtues, as noted by gas in the early hours. ‘And,’ he concluded vehemently, ‘’e writes for the papers, too. How’d *you* like to be written for in the papers—in verse, too, which is ’is ’abit. You leave ’im alone. ’Im an’ me have been friends for months.’

‘What about the dead man?’ said the policeman who had not given the blow.

‘I’ll tell you,’ I said relenting, and to the three policemen under the lights of Charing Cross assembled, I recounted faithfully and at length the adventures of the night, beginning with the *Breslau* and ending at St. Clement Danes. I described the sinful old ruffian in the ambulance in words that made him wriggle where he lay, and never since the Metropolitan Police was founded did three policemen laugh as those three laughed. The Strand echoed to it, and the unclean birds of the night stood and wondered.

‘Oh lor’!’ said Dempsey, wiping his eyes, ‘I’d ha’ given anything to see that old man runnin’ about with a wet blanket an’ all! Excuse me, sir, but you ought to get took up every night for to make us ’appy.’ He dissolved into fresh guffaws.

There was a clinking of silver and the two policemen of St. Clement Danes hurried back to their beats, laughing as they ran.

‘Take ’im to Charing Cross,’ said Dempsey

between shouts. 'They'll send the ambulance back in the morning.'

'Laddie, ye've misca'ed me shameful names, but I'm o'er old to go to a hospital. Dinna desert me, laddie. Tak me home to my wife,' said the voice in the ambulance.

'He's none so bad. 'Is wife'll comb 'is hair for 'im proper,' said Dempsey, who was a married man.

'Where d'you live?' I demanded.

'Brugglesmith,' was the answer.

'What's that?' I said to Dempsey, more skilled than I in portmanteau-words.

'Brook Green, 'Ammersmith,' Dempsey translated promptly.

'Of course,' I said. 'That's just the sort of place he would choose to live in. I only wonder that it was not Kew.'

'Are you going to wheel him 'ome, sir,' said Dempsey.

'I'd wheel him home if he lived in—Paradise. He's not going to get out of this ambulance while I'm here. He'd drag me into a murder for tuppence.'

'Then strap 'im up an' make sure,' said Dempsey, and he deftly buckled two straps that hung by the side of the ambulance over the man's body. Brugglesmith—I know not his other name—was sleeping deeply. He even smiled in his sleep.

'That's all right,' said Dempsey, and I moved off, wheeling my devil's perambulator before me. Trafalgar Square was empty except for the few that slept in the open. One of these wretches ranged alongside and begged for money, asserting that he had been a gentleman once.

‘So have I,’ I said. ‘That was long ago. I’ll give you a shilling if you’ll help me to push this thing.’

‘Is it a murder?’ said the vagabond, shrinking back. ‘I’ve not got to *that* yet.’

‘No, it’s going to be one,’ I answered. ‘I have.’

The man slunk back into the darkness and I pressed on, through Cockspur Street and up to Piccadilly Circus, wondering what I should do with my treasure. All London was asleep, and I had only this drunken carcase to bear me company. It was silent—silent as chaste Piccadilly. A young man of my acquaintance came out of a pink brick club as I passed. A faded carnation drooped from his button-hole; he had been playing cards, and was walking home before the dawn, when he overtook me.

‘What are you doing?’ he said.

I was far beyond any feeling of shame. ‘It’s for a bet,’ said I. ‘Come and help.’

‘Laddie, who’s yon?’ said the voice beneath the hood.

‘Good Lord!’ said the young man, leaping across the pavement. Perhaps card-losses had told on his nerves. Mine were steel that night.

‘The Lord, The Lord?’ the passionless, incurious voice went on. ‘Dinna be profane, laddie. He’ll come in His ain good time.’

The young man looked at me with horror.

‘It’s all part of the bet,’ I answered. ‘Do come and push!’

‘W—where are you going to?’ said he.

‘Brugglesmith,’ said the voice within. ‘Laddie, d’ye ken my wife?’

‘No,’ said I.

‘Well, she’s just a tremenjus wumman. Laddie, I want a drink. Knock at one o’ those braw houses, laddie, an’—an’—ye may kiss the girrl for your pains.’

‘Lie still, or I’ll gag you,’ I said, savagely.

The young man with the carnation crossed to the other side of Piccadilly, and hailed the only hansom visible for miles. What he thought I cannot tell.

I pressed on—wheeling, eternally wheeling—to Brook Green, Hammersmith. There I would abandon Brugglesmith to the gods of that desolate land. We had been through so much together that I could not leave him bound in the street. Besides, he would call after me, and oh ! it is a shameful thing to hear one’s name ringing down the emptiness of London in the dawn.

So I went on, past Apsley House, even to the coffee-stall, but there was no coffee for Brugglesmith. And into Knightsbridge—respectable Knightsbridge—I wheeled my burden, the body of Brugglesmith.

‘Laddie, what are ye going to do wi’ me?’ he said when opposite the barracks.

‘Kill you,’ I said briefly, ‘or hand you over to your wife. Be quiet.’

He would not obey. He talked incessantly—sliding in one sentence from clear-cut dialect to wild and drunken jumble. At the Albert Hall he said that I was the ‘Hattle Gardle buggle,’ which I apprehend is the Hatton Garden burglar. At

Kensington High Street he loved me as a son, but when my weary legs came to the Addison Road Bridge he implored me with tears to unloose the straps and to fight against the sin of vanity. No man molested us. It was as though a bar had been set between myself and all humanity till I had cleared my account with Brugglesmith. The glimmering of light grew in the sky ; the cloudy brown of the wood pavement turned to heather-purple ; I made no doubt that I should be allowed vengeance on Brugglesmith ere the evening.

At Hammersmith the heavens were steel-grey, and the day came weeping. All the tides of the sadness of an unprofitable dawning poured into the soul of Brugglesmith. He wept bitterly, because the puddles looked cold and houseless. I entered a half-waked public-house—in evening dress and an ulster, I marched to the bar—and got him whisky on condition that he should cease kicking at the canvas of the ambulance. Then he wept more bitterly, for that he had ever been associated with me, and so seduced into stealing the *Breslau's* dinghy.

The day was white and wan when I reached my long journey's end, and, putting back the hood, bade Brugglesmith declare where he lived. His eyes wandered disconsolately round the red and grey houses till they fell on a villa in whose garden stood a staggering board with the legend ‘To Let.’ It needed only this to break him down utterly, and with the breakage fled his fine fluency in his guttural northern tongue ; for liquor levels all.

‘Olely lil while,’ he sobbed. ‘Olely lil while.

Home—falmy—besht of falmies—wife too—*you* dole know my wife ! Left them all a lil while ago. Now everything's sold—all sold. Wife—falmy—all sold. Lemmegellup !'

I unbuckled the straps cautiously. Brugglesmith rolled off his resting-place and staggered to the house.

'Wattle I do ?' he said.

Then I understood the baser depths in the mind of Mephistopheles.

'Ring,' I said ; 'perhaps they are in the attic or the cellar.'

'You do' know my wife. She shleeps on soful in the dorlin' room, waiting meculhome. *You* do' know my wife.'

He took off his boots, covered them with his tall hat, and craftily as a Red Indian picked his way up the garden path and smote the bell marked 'Visitors' a severe blow with the clenched fist.

'Bell sole too. Sole electick bell ! Wassor bell this ? I can't riggle bell,' he moaned despairingly.

'You pull it—pull it hard,' I repeated, keeping a wary eye down the road. Vengeance was coming and I desired no witnesses.

'Yes, I'll pull it hard.' He slapped his forehead with inspiration. 'I'll pull it out.'

Leaning back he grasped the knob with both hands and pulled. A wild ringing in the kitchen was his answer. Spitting on his hands he pulled with renewed strength, and shouted for his wife. Then he bent his ear to the knob, shook his head, drew out an enormous yellow and red handkerchief, tied it round the knob, turned his back to the door, and pulled over his shoulder.

Either the handkerchief or the wire, it seemed to me, was bound to give way. But I had forgotten the bell. Something cracked in the kitchen, and Brugglesmith moved slowly down the doorsteps, pulling valiantly. Three feet of wire followed him.

'Pull, oh pull!' I cried. 'It's coming now.'

'Qui'ri', he said. '*I'll riggle bell.*'

He bowed forward, the wire creaking and straining behind him, the bell-knob clasped to his bosom, and from the noises within I fancied the bell was taking away with it half the woodwork of the kitchen and all the basement banisters.

'Get a purchase on her,' I shouted, and he spun round, lapping that good copper wire about him. I opened the garden gate politely, and he passed out, spinning his own cocoon. Still the bell came up, hand over hand, and still the wire held fast. He was in the middle of the road now, whirling like an impaled cockchafer, and shouting madly for his wife and family. There he met with the ambulance, the bell within the house gave one last peal, and bounded from the far end of the hall to the inner side of the hall-door, where it stayed fast. So did not my friend Brugglesmith. He fell upon his face embracing the ambulance as he did so, and the two turned over together in the toils of the never-sufficiently-to-be-advertised copper wire.

'Laddie,' he gasped, his speech returning, 'have I a legal remedy?'

'I will go and look for one,' I said, and, departing, found two policemen. These I told that daylight had surprised a burglar in Brook Green while he was engaged in stealing lead from an empty house.

Perhaps they had better take care of that bootless thief. He seemed to be in difficulties.

I led the way to the spot, and behold ! in the splendour of the dawning, the ambulance, wheels uppermost, was walking down the muddy road on two stockinged feet—was shuffling to and fro in a quarter of a circle whose radius was copper wire, and whose centre was the bell-plate of the empty house.

Next to the amazing ingenuity with which Bruggle-smith had contrived to lash himself under the ambulance, the thing that appeared to impress the constables most was the fact of the St. Clement Danes ambulance being at Brook Green, Hammer-smith.

They even asked me, of all people in the world, whether I knew anything about it !

. . . . .

They extricated him ; not without pain and dirt. He explained that he was repelling boarding-attacks by a 'Hattle Gardle buggle' who had sold his house, wife, and family. As to the bell-wire, he offered no explanation, and was borne off shoulder-high between the two policemen. Though his feet were not within six inches of the ground, they paddled swiftly, and I saw that in his magnificent mind he was running—furiously running.

Sometimes I have wondered whether he wished to find me.



## THE FABULISTS

1914

WHEN all the world would keep a matter hid,  
Since Truth is seldom friend to any crowd,  
Men write in fable, as old Æsop did,  
Jesting at that which none will name aloud.  
And this they needs must do, or it will fall  
Unless they please they are not heard at all.

When desperate Folly daily laboureth  
To work confusion upon all we have,  
When diligent Sloth demandeth Freedom's death,  
And banded Fear commandeth Honour's grave—  
Even in that certain hour before the fall,  
Unless men please they are not heard at all.

Needs must all please, yet some not all for need,  
Needs must all toil, yet some not all for gain,  
But that men taking pleasure may take heed,  
Whom present toil shall snatch from later pain.  
Thus some have toiled but their reward was small  
Since, though they pleased, they were not heard at  
all.

*This* was the lock that lay upon our lips,  
This was the yoke that we have undergone,  
Denying us all pleasant fellowships  
As in our time and generation.

Our pleasures unpursued age past recall.  
And for our pains—we are not heard at all.

What man hears aught except the groaning guns ?

What man heeds aught save what each instant  
brings ?

When each man's life all imaged life outruns,

What man shall pleasure in imaginings ?

So it hath fallen, as it was bound to fall,

We are not, nor we were not, heard at all.

## THE VORTEX

(August 1914)

‘Thy Lord spoke by inspiration to the Bee.

AL KORAN.

I HAVE, to my grief and loss, suppressed several notable stories of my friend, the Hon. A. M. Penfentenyou,<sup>1</sup> once Minister of Woods and Waysides in De Thouar’s first administration ; later, Premier in all but name of one of Our great and growing Dominions ; and now, as always, the idol of his own Province, which is two and one-half times the size of England.

For this reason I hold myself at liberty to deal with some portion of the truth concerning Penfentenyou’s latest visit to Our shores. He arrived at my house by car, on a hot summer day, in a white waistcoat and spats, sweeping black frock-coat and glistening top-hat—a little rounded, perhaps, at the edges, but agile as ever in mind and body.

‘What is the trouble now ? I asked, for the last time we had met, Penfentenyou was floating a three-million pound loan for his beloved but unscrupulous Province, and I did not wish to entertain any more of his financial friends.

‘We,’ Penfentenyou replied ambassadorially, ‘have

<sup>1</sup> See ‘The Puzzler,’ p. 312.

come to have a Voice in Your Councils. By the way, the Voice is coming down on the evening train with my Agent-General. I thought you wouldn't mind if I invited 'em. You know We're going to share Your burdens henceforward. You'd better get into training.'

'Certainly,' I replied. 'What's the Voice like?'

'He's in earnest,' said Penfentenyou. 'He's got It, and he's got It bad. He'll give It to you,' he said.

'What's his name?'

'We call him all sorts of names, but I think you'd better call him Mr. Lingnam. You won't have to do it more than once.'

'What's he suffering from?'

'The Empire. He's pretty nearly cured us all of Imperialism at home. P'r'aps he'll cure you.'

'Very good. What am I to do with him?'

'Don't you worry,' said Penfentenyou. 'He'll do it.'

And when Mr. Lingnam appeared half-an-hour later with the Agent-General for Penfentenyou's Dominion, he did just that.

He advanced across the lawn eloquent as all the tides. He said he had been observing to the Agent-General that it was both politically immoral and strategically unsound that forty-four million people should bear the entire weight of the defences of Our mighty Empire, but, as he had observed (here the Agent-General evaporated), we stood now upon the threshold of a new era in which the self-governing *and* self-respecting (bis) Dominions would rightly and righteously, as co-partners in Empery, shoulder their share of any burden which the Pan-Imperial

Council of the Future should allot. The Agent-General was already arranging for drinks with Penfentenyou at the other end of the garden. Mr. Lingnam swept me on to the most remote bench and settled to his theme.

We dined at eight. At nine Mr. Lingnam was only drawing abreast of things Imperial. At ten the Agent-General, who earns his salary, was shamelessly dozing on the sofa. At eleven he and Penfentenyou went to bed. At midnight Mr. Lingnam brought down his big-bellied despatch-box with the newspaper clippings and set to federating the Empire in earnest. I remember that he had three alternative plans. As a dealer in words, I plumped for the resonant third—'Reciprocally co-ordinated Senatorial Hegemony'—which he then elaborated in detail for three-quarters of an hour. At half-past one he urged me to have faith and to remember that nothing mattered except the Idea. Then he retired to his room, accompanied by one glass of cold water, and I went into the dawn-lit garden and prayed to any Power that might be off duty for the blood of Mr. Lingnam, Penfentenyou, and the Agent-General.

To me, as I have often observed elsewhere, the hour of earliest dawn is fortunate, and the wind that runs before it has ever been my most comfortable counsellor.

'Wait!' it said, all among the night's expectant rosebuds. 'To-morrow is also a day. Wait upon the Event!'

I went to bed so at peace with God and Man and Guest that when I waked I visited Mr. Lingnam in

pyjamas, and he talked to me Pan-Imperially for half-an-hour before his bath. Later, the Agent-General said he had letters to write, and Penfentyou invented a Cabinet crisis in his adored Dominion which would keep him busy with codes and cables all the forenoon. But I said firmly, 'Mr. Lingnam wishes to see a little of the country round here. You are coming with us in your own car.'

'It's a hired one,' Penfentyou objected.

'Yes. Paid for by me as a taxpayer,' I replied.

'And yours has a top, and the weather looks thundery,' said the Agent-General. 'Ours hasn't a wind-screen. Even our goggles were hired.'

'I'll lend you goggles,' I said. 'My car is under repairs.'

The hireling who had looked to be returned to London spat and growled on the drive. She was an open car, capable of some eighteen miles on the flat, with tetanic gears and a perpetual palsy.

'It won't make the least difference,' sighed the Agent-General. 'He'll only raise his voice. He did it all the way coming down.'

'I say,' said Penfentyou suspiciously, 'what are you doing all this *for*?'

'Love of the Empire,' I answered, as Mr. Lingnam tripped up in dust-coat and binoculars. 'Now, Mr. Lingnam will tell us exactly what he wants to see. He probably knows more about England than the rest of us put together.'

'I read it up yesterday,' said Mr. Lingnam simply. While we stowed the lunch-basket (one can never make too sure with a hired car) he outlined a very pretty and instructive little day's run.

‘You’ll drive, of course?’ said Penfentenyou to him. ‘It’s the only thing you know anything about.’

This astonished me, for your greater Federationists are rarely mechanics, but Mr. Lingnam said he would prefer to be inside for the present and enjoy our conversation.

Well settled on the back seat, he did not once lift his eyes to the mellow landscape around him, or throw a word at the life of the English road which to me is one renewed and unreasoned orgy of delight. The mustard-coloured scouts of the Automobile Association; their natural enemies, the unjust police; our natural enemies, the deliberate market-day cattle, broadside-on at all corners, the bicycling butcher-boy a furlong behind; road-engines that pulled giddy-go-rounds, rifle galleries, and swings, and sucked snortingly from wayside ponds in defiance of the notice-board; traction-engines, their trailers piled high with road metal; uniformed village nurses, one per seven statute miles, flitting by on their wheels; governess-carts full of pink children jogging unconcernedly past roaring, brazen touring-cars; the wayside rector with virgins in attendance, their faces screwed up against our dust; motor-bicycles of every shape charging down at every angle; red flags of rifle-ranges; detachments of dusty-putteed Territorials; coveys of flagrant children playing in mid-street, and the wise, educated English dog safe and quite silent on the pavement if his fool-mistress would but cease from trying to save him, passed and repassed us in sunlit or shaded settings. But Mr. Lingnam only talked. He talked—we all sat together behind so that we could not escape him—and

he talked above the worn gears and a certain maddening swish of one badly patched tire—and he talked of the Federation of the Empire against all conceivable dangers except himself. Yet I was neither brutally rude like Penfentenyou, nor swooningly bored like the Agent-General. I remembered a certain Joseph Finsbury who delighted the Tregonwell Arms on the borders of the New Forest with ‘nine’—it should have been ten—‘versions of a single income of two hundred pounds’ placing the imaginary person in—but I could not recall the list of towns further than ‘London, Paris, Bagdad, and Spitzbergen.’ This last I must have murmured aloud, for the Agent-General suddenly became human and went on : ‘Bussorah, Heligoland, and the Scilly Islands——’

‘What?’ growled Penfentenyou.

‘Nothing,’ said the Agent-General, squeezing my hand affectionately. ‘Only we have just found out that we are brothers.’

‘Exactly,’ said Mr. Lingnam. ‘That’s what I’ve been trying to lead up to. We’re *all* brothers. D’you realise that fifteen years ago such a conversation as we’re having would have been unthinkable? The Empire wouldn’t have been ripe for it. To go back, even ten years——’

‘I’ve got it,’ cried the Agent-General. ‘“Brighton, Cincinnati, and Nijni-Novgorod!” God bless R. L. S.! Go on, Uncle Joseph. I can endure much now.’

Mr. Lingnam went on like our shandrydan, slowly and loudly. He admitted that a man obsessed with a Central Idea—and, after all, the only thing that



mattered was the Idea—might become a bore, but the World's Work, he pointed out, had been done by bores. So he laid his bones down to that work till we abandoned ourselves to the passage of time and the Mercy of Allah, Who Alone closes the Mouths of His Prophets. And we wasted more than fifty miles of summer's vivid own England upon him the while.

About two o'clock we topped Sumtner Rising and looked down on the village of Sumtner Barton, which lies just across a single railway line, spanned by a red brick bridge. The thick, thunderous June airs brought us gusts of melody from a giddy-go-round steam-organ in full blast near the pond on the village green. Drums, too, thumped and banners waved and regalia flashed at the far end of the broad village street. Mr. Lingnam asked why.

'Nothing Imperial, I'm afraid. It looks like a Foresters' Fête—one of our big Mutual Benefit Societies,' I explained.

'The Idea only needs to be co-ordinated to Imperial scale——' he began.

'But it means that the pub. will be crowded,' I went on.

'What's the matter with lunching by the roadside here?' said Penfentyenou. 'We've got the lunch-basket.'

'Haven't you ever heard of Sumtner Barton ales?' I demanded, and he became the administrator at once, saying, 'I see! Lingnam can drive us in and we'll get some, while Holford'—this was the hireling chauffeur, whose views on beer we knew not—'lays out lunch here. That'll be better than eating at the pub. We can take in the Foresters' Fete as well,

and perhaps I can buy some newspapers at the station.'

'True,' I answered. 'The railway station is just under that bridge, and we'll come back and lunch here.'

I indicated a terrace of cool clean shade beneath kindly beeches at the head of Sumtner Rise. As Holford got out the lunch-basket, a detachment of Regular troops on manœuvres swung down the baking road.

'Ah !' said Mr. Lingnam, the monthly-magazine roll in his voice. 'All Europe is an armed camp, groaning, as I remember I once wrote, under the weight of its accoutrements.'

'Oh, hop in and drive,' cried Penfentenyou. 'We want that beer !'

It made no difference. Mr. Lingnam could have federated the Empire from a tight rope. He continued his oration at the wheel as we trundled.

'The danger to the Younger Nations is of being drawn into this vortex of Militarism,' he went on, dodging the rear of the soldiery.

'Slow past troops,' I hinted. 'It saves 'em dust. And we overtake on the right as a rule in England.'

'Thanks !' Mr. Lingnam slued over. 'That's another detail which needs to be co-ordinated throughout the Empire. But to go back to what I was saying. My idea has always been that the component parts of the Empire should take counsel among themselves on the approach of war, so that, after we have decided on the merits of the *casus belli*, we can co-ordinate what part each Dominion shall play whenever war is, unfortunately, a possibility.'

We neared the hog-back railway bridge, and the hireling knocked piteously at the grade. Mr. Lingnam changed gears, and she hoisted herself up to a joyous *Yip-i-addy-i-ay!* from the steam-organ. As we topped the arch we saw a Foresters' band with banners marching down the street.

'That's all very fine,' said the Agent-General, 'but in real life things have a knack of happening without approaching——'

(Some schools of Thought hold that Time is not ; and that when we attain complete enlightenment we shall behold past, present, and future as One Awful Whole. I myself have nearly achieved this.)

We dipped over the bridge into the village. A boy on a bicycle, loaded with four paper bonnet-boxes, pedalled towards us, out of an alley on our right. He bowed his head the better to overcome the ascent, and naturally took his left. Mr. Lingnam swerved frantically to the right. Penfentenyou shouted. The boy looked up, saw the car was like to squeeze him against the bridge wall, flung himself off his machine and across the narrow pavement into the nearest house. He slammed the door at the precise moment when the car, all brakes set, bunted the abandoned bicycle, shattering three of the bonnet-boxes and jerking the fourth over the unscreened dashboard into Mr. Lingnam's arms.

There was a dead stillness, then a hiss like that of escaping steam, and a man who had been running towards us ran the other way.

‘Why ! I think that those must be bees,’ said Mr. Lingnam.

They were—four full swarms—and the first living objects which he had remarked upon all day.

Some one said, ‘Oh, God !’ The Agent-General went out over the back of the car, crying resolutely : ‘Stop the traffic ! Stop the traffic, there !’ Penfentenyou was already on the pavement ringing a door-bell, so I had both their rugs, which—for I am an apiarist—I threw over my head. While I was tucking my trousers into my socks—for I am an apiarist of experience—Mr. Lingnam picked up the unexploded bonnet-box and with a single magnificent gesture (he told us afterwards he thought there was a river beneath) hurled it over the parapet of the bridge, ere he ran across the road toward the village green. Now, the station platform immediately below was crowded with Foresters and their friends waiting to welcome a delegation from a sister Court. I saw the box burst on the flint edging of the station garden and the contents sweep forward cone-wise like shrapnel. But the result was stimulating rather than sedative. All those well-dressed people below shouted like Sodom and Gomorrah. Then they moved as a unit into the booking-office, the waiting-rooms, and other places, shut doors and windows and declaimed aloud, while the incoming train whistled far down the line.

I pivoted round cross-legged on the back seat, like a Circassian beauty beneath her veil, and saw Penfentenyou, his coat-collar over his ears, dancing before a shut door and holding up handfuls of currency to a silver-haired woman at an upper window, who only

mouthed and shook her head. A little child, carrying a kitten, came smiling round a corner. Suddenly (but these things moved me no more than so many yards of threepenny cinematograph-film) the kitten leaped spitting from her arms, the child burst into tears, Penfentenyou, still dancing, snatched her up and tucked her under his coat, the woman's countenance blanched, the front door opened, Penfentenyou and the child pressed through, and I was alone in an inhospitable world where every one was shutting windows and calling children home.

A voice cried : ' You've frowtened 'em ! You've frowtened 'em ! Throw dust on 'em and they'll settle ! '

I did not desire to throw dust on any created thing. I needed both hands for my draperies and two more for my stockings. Besides, the bees were doing me no hurt. They recognised me as a member of the County Bee-keepers' Association who had paid his annual subscription and was entitled to a free seat at all apicultural exhibitions. The quiver and the churn of the hiring car, or it might have been the lurching banners and the arrogant big drum, inclined many of them to go up-street, and pay court to the advancing Foresters' band. So they went, such as had not followed Mr. Lingnam in his flight toward the green, and I looked out of two goggled eyes instead of half a one at the approaching musicians, while I listened with both ears to the delayed train's second whistle down the line beneath me.

The Foresters' band no more knew what was coming than do troops under sudden fire. Indeed, there were the same extravagant gestures and con-

tortions as attend wounds and deaths in war ; the very same uncanny cessations of speech—for the trombone was cut off at midslide, even as a man drops with a syllable on his tongue. They clawed, they slapped, they fled, leaving behind them a trophy of banners and brasses crudely arranged round the big drum. Then that end of the street also shut its windows, and the village, stripped of life, lay round me like a reef at low tide. Though I am, as I have said, an apiarist in good standing, I never realised that there were so many bees in the world. When they had woven a flashing haze from one end of the desert street to the other, there remained reserves enough to form knops and pendules on all window-sills and gutter-ends, without diminishing the multitudes in the three oozing bonnet-boxes, or drawing on the Fourth (Railway) Battalion in charge of the station below. The prisoners in the waiting-rooms and other places there cried out a great deal (I argued that they were dying of the heat), and at regular intervals the stationmaster called and called to a signalman who was not on duty, and the train whistled as it drew nearer.

Then Penfentenyou, venal and adaptable politician of the type that survives at the price of all the higher emotions, appeared at the window of the house on my right, broken and congested with mirth, the woman beside him, and the child in his arms. I saw his mouth open and shut, he hollowed his hands round it, but the churr of the motor and the bees drowned his words. He pointed dramatically across the street many times and fell back, tears running down his face. I turned like a hooded barbette in a heavy

seaway (not knowing when my trousers would come out of my socks again) through one hundred and eighty degrees, and in due time bore on the village green. There was a salmon in the pond, rising short at a cloud of midges to the tune of *Yip-i-addy* ; but there was none to gaff him. The swing-boats were empty, coco-nuts sat still on their red sticks before white screens, and the gay-painted horses of the giddy-go-rounds revolved riderless. All was melody, green turf, bright water, and this greedy gambolling fish. When I had identified it by its grey gills and binoculars as Lingnam, I prostrated myself before Allah in that mirth which is more truly labour than any prayer. Then I turned to the purple Penfentenyou at the window, and wiped my eyes on the rug edge.

He raised the window half one cautious inch and bellowed through the crack : ' Did you see *him* ? Have they got *you* ? I can see lots of things from here. It's like a three-ring circus ! '

' Can you see the station ? ' I replied, nodding toward the right rear mudguard.

He twisted and craned sideways, but could not command that beautiful view.

' No ! What's it like ? ' he cried.

' Hell ! ' I shouted. The silvery-haired woman frowned ; so did Penfentenyou, and, I think, apologised to her for my language.

' You're always so extreme,' he fluted reproachfully. ' You forget that nothing matters except the Idea. Besides, they are this lady's bees.'

He closed the window, and introduced us through it in dumb show ; but he contrived to give the impression that *I* was the specimen under glass.

A spurt of damp steam saved me from apoplexy. The train had lost patience at last, and was coming into the station directly beneath me to see what was the matter. Happy voices sang and heads were thrust out all along the compartments, but none answered their songs or greetings. She halted, and the people began to get out. Then they began to get in again, as their friends in the waiting-rooms advised. All did not catch the warning, so there was congestion at the doors, but those whom the bees caught got in first.

Still the bees, more bent on their own business than wanton torture, kept to the south end of the platform by the bookstall, and that was why the completely exposed engine-driver at the north end of the train did not at first understand the hermetically sealed stationmaster when the latter shouted to him many times to 'get on out o' this.'

'Where are you?' was the reply. 'And what for?'

'It don't matter where I am, an' you'll get what-for in a minute if you don't shift,' said the stationmaster. 'Drop 'em at Parson's Meadow and they can walk up over the fields.'

That bare-armed, thin-shirted idiot, leaning out of the cab, took the stationmaster's orders as an insult to his dignity, and roared at the shut offices: 'You'll give me what-for, will you? Look 'ere, I'm not in the 'abit of——' His outstretched hand flew to his neck. . . . Do you know that if you sting an engine-driver it is the same as stinging his train? She starts with a jerk that nearly smashes the couplings, and runs, barking like a dog, till she is out of sight.



Nor does she think about spilled people and parted families on the platform behind her. I had to do all that. There was a man called Fred, and his wife Harriet—a cheery, full-blooded couple—who interested me immensely before they battered their way into a small detached building, already densely occupied. There was also a nameless bachelor who sat under a half-opened umbrella and twirled it dizzily, which was so new a game that I applauded aloud.

When they had thoroughly cleared the ground, the bees set about making comb for publication at the bookstall counter. Presently some bold hearts tip-toed out of the waiting-rooms over the loud gravel with the consciously modest air of men leaving church, climbed the wooden staircase to the bridge, and so reached my level, where the inexhaustible bonnet-boxes were still vomiting squadrons and platoons. There was little need to bid them descend. They had wrapped their heads in handkerchiefs, so that they looked like the disappointed dead scuttling back to Purgatory. Only one old gentleman, pontifically draped in a banner embroidered 'Temperance and Fortitude,' ran the gauntlet up-street, shouting as he passed me, 'It's night or Blücher, Mister.' They let him in at the White Hart, the pub. where I should have bought the beer.

After this the day sagged. I fell to reckoning how long a man in a Turkish bath, weakened by excessive laughter, could live without food, and specially drink ; and how long a disenfranchised bee could hold out under the same conditions.

Obviously, since her one practical joke costs her

her life, the bee can have but small sense of humour ; but her fundamentally dismal and ungracious outlook on life impressed me beyond words. She had paralysed locomotion, wiped out trade, social intercourse, mutual trust, love, friendship, sport, music (the lonely steam-organ had run down at last), all that gives substance, colour or savour to life, and yet, in the barren desert she had created, was not one whit more near to the evolution of a saner order of things. The Heavens were darkened with the swarms' divided counsels ; the street shimmered with their purposeless sallies. They clotted on tiles and gutter-pipes, and began frenziedly to build a cell or two of comb ere they discovered that their queen was not with them ; then flung off to seek her, or whirled, dishevelled and insane, into another hissing nebula on the false rumour that she was there. I scowled upon them with disfavour, and a massy, blue thunder-head rose majestically from behind the elm-trees off Sumtner Barton Rectory, arched over and scowled with me. Then I realised that it was not bees nor locusts that had darkened the skies, but the oncoming of the malignant English thunder-storm—the one thing before which even Deborah the bee cannot express her silly little self.

'Aha ! Now you'll catch it,' I said, as the herald gusts set the big drum rolling down the street like a box-kite. Up and up yearned the dark cloud, till the first lightning quivered and cut. Deborah cowered. Where she flew, there she fled ; where she was, there she sat still ; and the solid rain closed in on her as a book that is closed when the chapter is finished. By the time it had soaked to my second rug, Penfen-

tenyou appeared at the window, wiping his false mouth on a napkin.

'Are you all right?' he inquired. 'Then *that's* all right! Mrs. Bellamy says that her bees don't sting in the wet. You'd better fetch Lingnam over. He's got to pay for them and the bicycle.'

I had no words which the silver-haired lady could listen to, but paddled across the flooded street between flashes to the pond on the green. Mr. Lingnam, scarcely visible through the sheeting downpour, trotted round the edge. He bore himself nobly, and lied at the mere sight of me.

'Isn't this wet?' he cried. 'It has drenched me to the skin. I shall need a change.'

'Come along,' I said. 'I don't know what you'll get, but you deserve more.'

Penfentenyou, dry, fed, and in command, let us in. 'You,' he whispered to me, 'are to wait in the scullery. Mrs. Bellamy didn't like the way you talked about her bees. Hsh! Hsh! She's a kind-hearted lady. She's a widow, Lingnam, but she's kept *his* clothes, and as soon as you've paid for the damage she'll rent you a suit. I've arranged it all!'

'Then tell him he mustn't undress in my hall,' said a voice from the stair-head.

'Tell *her*——' Lingnam began.

'Come and look at the pretty suit I've chosen,' Penfentenyou cooed, as one cajoling a maniac.

I staggered out-of-doors again, and fell into the car, whose ever-running machinery masked my yelps and hiccups. When I raised my forehead from the wheel, I saw that traffic through the village had been resumed, after, as my watch showed, one and one-

half hour's suspension. There were two limousines, one landau, one doctor's car, three touring-cars, one patent steam-laundry van, three tricars, one traction engine, some motor-cycles, one with a side-car, and one brewery lorry. It was the allegory of my own imperturbable country, delayed for a short time by unforeseen external events but now going about her business, and I blessed Her with tears in my eyes, even though I knew She looked upon me as drunk and incapable.

Then troops came over the bridge behind me—a company of dripping wet Regulars without any expression. In their rear, carrying the lunch-basket, marched the Agent-General and Holford the hired chauffeur.

'I say,' said the Agent-General, nodding at the darkened khaki backs. 'If *that's* what we've got to depend on in event of war they're a broken reed. They ran like hares—ran like hares, I tell you.'

'And you?' I asked.

'Oh, I just sauntered back over the bridge and stopped the traffic that end. Then I had lunch. 'Pity about the beer, though. I say—these cushions are sopping wet!'

'I'm sorry,' I said. 'I haven't had time to turn 'em.'

'Nor there wasn't any need to 'ave kept the engine runnin' all this time,' said Holford sternly. 'I'll 'ave to account for the expenditure of petrol. It exceeds the mileage indicated, you see.'

'I'm sorry,' I repeated. After all, that is the way that taxpayers regard most crises.

The house-door opened and Penfentenyou and another came out into the now thinning rain.

'Ah ! There you both are ! Here's Lingnam,' he cried. 'He's got a little wet. He's had to change.'

We saw that. I was too sore and weak to begin another laugh, but the Agent-General crumpled up where he stood. The late Mr. Bellamy must have been a man of tremendous personality, which he had impressed on every angle of his garments. I was told later that he had died in delirium tremens, which at once explained the pattern, and the reason why Mr. Lingnam, writhing inside it, swore so inspiredly. Of the deliberate and diffuse Federationist there remained no trace, save the binoculars and two damp whiskers. We stood on the pavement, before Elemental Man calling on Elemental Powers to condemn and incinerate Creation.

'Well, hadn't we better be getting back ?' said the Agent-General.

'Look out !' I remarked casually. 'Those bonnet-boxes are full of bees still !'

'Are they ?' said the livid Mr. Lingnam, and tilted them over with the late Mr. Bellamy's large boots. Deborah rolled out in drenched lumps into the swilling gutter. There was a muffled shriek at the window where Mrs. Bellamy gesticulated.

'It's all right. I've paid for them,' said Mr. Lingnam. He dumped out the last dregs like mould from a pot-bound flower-pot.

'What ? Are you going to take 'em home with you ?' said the Agent-General.

'No !' He passed a wet hand over his streaky forehead. 'Wasn't there a bicycle that was the beginning of this trouble ?' said he.

'It's under the fore-axle, sir,' said Holford promptly. 'I can fish it out from 'ere.'

'Not till I've done with it, please.' Before we could stop him, he had jumped into the car and taken charge. The hireling leaped into her collar, surged, shrieked (less loudly than Mrs. Bellamy at the window), and swept on. That which came out behind her was, as Holford truly observed, no joy-wheel. Mr. Lingnam swung round the big drum in the market-place and thundered back, shouting : 'Leave it alone. It's my meat !'

'Mince-meat, 'e means,' said Holford after this second trituration. 'You couldn't say now it 'ad ever *been* one, could you ?'

Mrs. Bellamy opened the window and spoke. It appears she had only charged for damage to the bicycle, not for the entire machine which Mr. Lingnam was ruthlessly gleaning, spoke by spoke, from the highway and cramming into the slack of the hood. At last he answered, and I have never seen a man foam at the mouth before. 'If you don't stop, I shall come into your house—in this car—and drive upstairs and—kill you !'

She stopped ; he stopped. Holford took the wheel, and we got away. It was time, for the sun shone after the storm, and Deborah beneath the tiles and the eaves already felt its reviving influence compel her to her interrupted labours of federation. We warned the village policeman at the far end of the street that he might have to suspend traffic again. The proprietor of the giddy-go-round, swings, and coco-nut-shies wanted to know from whom, in this world or another, he could recover damages. Mr.

Lingnam referred him most directly to Mrs. Bellamy. . . . Then we went home.

After dinner that evening Mr. Lingnam rose stiffly in his place to make a few remarks on the Federation of the Empire on the lines of Co-ordinated, Offensive Operations, backed by the Entire Effective Forces, Moral, Military and Fiscal, of Permanently Mobilised Communities, the whole brought to bear, without any respect to the merits of any *casus belli*, instantaneously, automatically, and remorselessly at the first faint buzz of war.

‘The trouble with Us,’ said he, ‘is that We take such an infernally long time making sure that We are right that We don’t go ahead when things happen. For instance, *I* ought to have gone ahead instead of pulling up when I hit that bicycle.’

‘But you were in the wrong, Lingnam, when you turned to the right,’ I put in.

‘I don’t want to hear any more of your damned, detached, mugwumping excuses for the other fellow,’ he snapped.

‘Now you’re beginning to see things,’ said Penfentyou. ‘I hope you won’t backslide when the swellings go down.’

## THE SONG OF SEVEN CITIES

I WAS Lord of Cities very sumptuously builded.  
Seven roaring Cities paid me tribute from afar.  
Ivory their outposts were—the guardrooms of them  
    gilded,  
And garrisoned with Amazons invincible in war.

All the world went softly when it walked before my  
    Cities—  
Neither King nor Army vexed my peoples at their  
    toil.  
Never horse nor chariot irked or overbore my Cities.  
Never Mob nor Ruler questioned whence they drew  
    their spoil.

Banded, mailed and arrogant from sunrise unto sun-  
    set,  
Singing while they sacked it, they possessed the land  
    at large.  
Yet when men would rob them, they resisted, they  
    made onset  
And pierced the smoke of battle with a thousand-  
    sabred charge !

So they warred and trafficked only yesterday, my  
    Cities.  
To-day there is no mark or mound of where my  
    Cities stood.



For the River rose at midnight and it washed away  
my Cities.

They are evened with Atlantis and the towns before  
the Flood.

Rain on rain-gorged channels raised the water-levels  
round them,

Freshet backed on freshet swelled and swept their  
world from sight ;

Till the emboldened floods linked arms and, flashing  
forward, drowned them—

Drowned my Seven Cities and their peoples in one  
night !

Low among the alders lie their derelict foundations,  
The beams wherein they trusted and the plinths  
whereon they built—

My rulers and their treasure and their unborn popu-  
lations,

Dead, destroyed, aborted, and defiled with mud and  
silt !

The Daughters of the Palace whom they cherished  
in my Cities,

My silver-tongued Princesses, and the promise of  
their May—

Their bridegrooms of the June-tide—all have perished  
in my Cities,

With the harsh envenomed virgins that can neither  
love nor play.

I was Lord of Cities—I will build anew my Cities,  
Seven, set on rocks, above the wrath of any flood.

Nor will I rest from search till I have filled anew my  
Cities  
With peoples undefeated of the dark, enduring blood.

To the sound of trumpets shall their seed restore my  
Cities,  
Wealthy and well-weaponed, that once more may I  
behold  
All the world go softly when it walks before my  
Cities,  
And the horses and the chariots fleeing from them as  
of old !

## THE NECESSITARIAN

I KNOW not in Whose hands are laid  
To empty upon earth  
From unsuspected ambushade  
The very Urns of Mirth :

Who bids the Heavenly Lark arise  
And cheer our solemn round—  
The Jest beheld with streaming eyes  
And grovellings on the ground ;

Who joins the flats of Time and Chance  
Behind the prey preferred,  
And thrones on Shrieking Circumstance  
The Sacredly Absurd,

Till Laughter, voiceless through excess,  
Waves mute appeal and sore,  
Above the midriff's deep distress,  
For breath to laugh once more.

No creed hath dared to hail Him Lord,  
No raptured choirs proclaim,  
And Nature's strenuous Overword  
Hath nowhere breathed His Name.

Yet, it must be, on wayside jape,  
The selfsame Power bestows  
The selfsame power as went to shape  
His Planet or His Rose.

THE END

